



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## Contents

### FEATURE ARTICLE

#### 1 Counter-Terrorism Issues for the Next President

By Richard Clarke and Rob Knake

### REPORTS

#### 4 U.S. Security Assistance to Philippines: A Success Story Against Terrorism

By Peter Chalk

#### 8 Takeovers of Moderate Muslim Institutions: Radical Islamist Tactics at the Local Level

By Madeleine Gruen

#### 10 Radical Madrasas in Southeast Asia

By Scott Atran, Justin Magouirk &amp; Jeremy Ginges

#### 14 The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology

By Assaf Moghadam

#### 17 Somalia's al-Shabab Reconstitutes Fighting Force

By Anonymous

#### 20 Deconstructing the Myth about al-Qa`ida and Khobar

By Thomas Hegghammer

#### 22 Return of the Arabs: Al-Qa`ida's Military Role in the Afghan Insurgency

By Brian Williams

#### 25 After Action Report: An Army Lieutenant's View of AQI's Operations in al-Khidr and Hanaswa

By First Lieutenant Jon Patrick Cheatwood

#### 27 Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

#### 32 CTC Sentinel Staff & Contacts

## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners in order to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

## Counter-Terrorism Issues for the Next President

By Richard Clarke and Rob Knake



THE NEXT PRESIDENT will inherit from the current administration a dysfunctional counter-terrorism apparatus.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. military has been stretched thin by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the intelligence community has been discredited by the lack of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the ongoing failed hunt for Usama bin Ladin, and the Department of Homeland Security has so many missions and so many disparate agencies that it is ineffective. An even more challenging task will be to restore to the United States credibility in the world and to reduce the number of people who bear us ill will.

Every new president has about a year when they can better achieve goals and changes because of their fresh mandate from the people. Without a clear agenda, however, the first year can be easily squandered

and political capital spent on other, less important matters. In an effort to prevent this from occurring, the authors propose a three-part framework for combating terrorism that involves drying up support for terrorism, improving our intelligence capabilities and rethinking our approach to homeland security.

### Ending the GWOT and Reducing Support for Terrorism

The United States is not fighting a "Global War on Terrorism" any more than it fought a "War on Drugs" in the 1990s. During that time, General Barry McCaffrey, who served as "Drug Czar," was adamant that "war" was a poor metaphor for what needed to be accomplished. "We're not going to run a year- or two-year-long campaign and achieve total victory," he said. This sentiment can be applied equally to the current situation where the war metaphor has been counter-productive. Since this problem has been framed as the GWOT, the Pentagon has been the driving force behind U.S.

<sup>1</sup> This essay is expanded in the forthcoming book, Richard Clarke, *Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters* (Spring 2008).

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counter-terrorism policy. Yet, the military is a sometimes ineffective tool. As General David Petraeus has noted, sometimes the best weapons don't shoot.

To defeat the al-Qa`ida movement, it must be recognized as a cancer infecting only a small percentage of the greater body of peace-loving Muslims worldwide. While eliminating the cancer is our end

**“A relatively small, elite, highly trained and experienced professional intelligence analysis organization should serve the DNI and the president.”**

objective, our more immediate goal is to keep it from spreading. Yet many of our actions aimed at capturing and killing terrorists have alienated wide swathes of the Muslim world. In short, what we have done to eliminate the cancer has served to spread it. The most important counter-terrorism tools are law enforcement, intelligence and ideology. When military action is called for, we must act swiftly and decisively, but in the context of defeating al-Qa`ida, smart bombs, cruise missiles and SEAL teams must be applied like a surgeon's scalpel to prevent a counter-productive reaction among people affected by the collateral damage.

It is the authors' judgment that removing U.S. troops from Iraq is the single biggest step we can take to reduce support for al-Qa`ida and eliminate anti-U.S. sentiments across the globe. By ending the war in Iraq, we will remove a justifiable grievance that is the rallying cry for the al-Qa`ida movement. Other steps must include sincere efforts to bring peace to Israel and Palestine and to help our allies in the Muslim world move away from oppressive tactics of government. We should not, however, force democracy onto nations and cultures that are not prepared. Most importantly, we need to work with our Islamic friends to promote ideological counter-weights to al-Qa`ida.

#### Intelligence

Our reliance on military solutions to the threat posed by al-Qa`ida stems in part from the fact that our intelligence agencies

have not been capable of offering adequate alternatives. The program needed to address our current intelligence needs is very different from the program we needed to fight and win the Cold War. That system relied heavily on our technological prowess. Defeating al-Qa`ida, however, will be largely about human intelligence. Breaking the cycle of intelligence failures will take a strong Director of National Intelligence (DNI) with experience in the intelligence community to shift the emphasis from the fiefdoms of expensive intelligence collection technologies to an integrated, analyst-driven structure. The new DNI must energetically pursue a series of new initiatives aimed at this purpose:

- For the new DNI to be responsible and accountable for U.S. intelligence, he or she needs to control all of the U.S. intelligence agencies and their budgets. Today, most of their money is buried in the Pentagon's budget, and the roles of the secretary of defense and the DNI are overlapping. There should be a single, independent, integrated intelligence budget and most of the intelligence agencies now in the Department of Defense need to be shifted to the DNI, specifically the National Security Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency.

- Within that integrated budget, we need to further shift resources from traditional, costly satellite collection systems run by the NRO to fund other programs in cyberspace and in the field of human intelligence.

- The National Clandestine Service (NCS), our human spy agency, should continue its slow efforts to expand the use of Not Official Cover (NOC)<sup>2</sup> programs, but it should also recast our spying effort to reflect the reality that most information will continue to come from open sources, walk-ins and liaison services. Americans are not likely to become good at spying anytime soon and, therefore, the Clandestine Service should focus its efforts at enhancing what we can do well.

- The DNI must rationalize the roles, missions and capabilities of the various U.S. intelligence agencies when it comes

to operating in cyberspace. Increasingly, the information spy agencies want to collect is in cyberspace, as are the controls for vital systems. The highly skilled personnel and sophisticated systems we need to operate in cyberspace are in such short supply that we cannot spread them out over dozens of military, defense and intelligence agencies.

- A relatively small, elite, highly trained and experienced professional intelligence analysis organization should serve the DNI and the president. This Intelligence Assessment Staff must be institutionally insulated from political pressures and it must be able to control intelligence collection to support its analysis efforts from being stolen.

- For intelligence agencies to be trusted by the citizenry, there must be a real program in which someone is actively monitoring those agencies to ensure that there is no abuse of laws or policies. Thus, the national security adviser and the DNI should create an active Executive Branch oversight program for all Intelligence Community efforts, especially the restricted covert action programs. The existing National Security Council staff mechanism for that oversight are weak and under-resourced.

#### Homeland Security

The creation and subsequent dysfunction of the Department of Homeland Security reveals many of the reasons why the U.S. government fails so often at national security. For several years, during two

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administrations of different political parties, people engaged in federal management and in national security tried to resist a politically motivated drive to be seen to “do something” about security through bureaucratic reorganization. When, after the September 11 attacks, that drive became irresistible, the chief criteria in designing and managing the

<sup>2</sup> NOC refers to spies based outside of U.S. government facilities.

major new government enterprise was appearance and politics, not problem solving. The largest federal department created in more than 50 years was slammed together with insufficient

## **“The next president must make brokering the necessary compromises to secure the borders a top priority.”**

resources and regulatory powers. Worse yet, far from recruiting the best managers that government and industry could assemble, it was laced with political appointees and contractors to a degree never seen before in any federal agency.

In order to make our homeland security apparatus work, we first need to break it up into manageable components. The drive to centralize everything related to homeland security under one roof showed a basic lack of understanding of how government agencies work. One person cannot lead an agency responsible for both screening airline passengers and responding to hurricanes. Instead, the organizing principle should consolidate around the functions the agencies perform:

- FEMA should be broken out and given responsibility as an independent agency for mitigating and responding to emergencies.
- Domestic intelligence functions within DHS and the FBI should be moved into a single new agency under the control of the DNI.
- The remaining components of DHS are largely uniformed, law enforcement entities responsible for border and immigration security and transportation security. These agencies should remain in the same organization but under a new and less Orwellian name, perhaps the Department of Border and Transportation Security (BTS).

The remaining agenda for DHS includes two major issues: bringing state and local government meaningfully into the

homeland security equation, and securing the country's borders.

During the past seven years, the federal government has thrown billions of grant dollars at cities and states without providing any guidance on how these funds should be used. The results have been less than impressive. At the same time, the federal government has cut support for local law enforcement. We need to establish clear goals for vulnerability reduction and capacity enhancement and develop three and five year plans to fund and meet them. One of the main goals in this effort must be to make local law enforcement a reliable part of our prevention efforts by funding intelligence positions in police departments dedicated to counterterrorism and finding a formula to make fusion centers work.

The next president must make brokering the necessary compromises to secure the borders a top priority. This cannot be done without also creating a migrant worker program to reduce the number of illegal immigrants so that we can focus on the security threat posed by border crossings. This reform will also require establishing a secure credentialing system with civil liberties and privacy protections.

### **The Keys to Getting it Right**

The agenda we have laid out is ambitious, especially since the president will be simultaneously addressing a host of other demanding issues including withdrawal

## **“In order to meet this demanding agenda, the next president will need to inspire, recruit and retain a new generation of civilian civil servants.”**

from Iraq, responding to global warming and solving the health care crisis. Having a risk management system that is itself a high risk of failure, however, is not prudent. We are, after all, talking about the security of the United States, a national government's first priority and one that must be done well.

In order to meet this demanding agenda, the next president will need to inspire, recruit and retain a new generation of civilian civil servants. Both the Department of Homeland Security and the Intelligence Community have outsourced too much of their mission to private contractors. National security requires a dedicated corps of professionals, appropriately trained and motivated to perform the essential functions of analysis, planning, contract oversight and crisis management. The people who perform these functions should not be contractors and they should not solely be political appointees. The next president must make it a priority to bring many of these jobs back “in-house” and work to attract the next generation of dedicated public servants.

*Richard A. Clarke is the Chairman of Good Harbor Consulting LLC, a homeland security and cyber security consulting firm. Mr. Clarke served the last three presidents as a senior White House Advisor. Over the course of an unprecedented 11 consecutive years of White House service, he held the titles of: Special Assistant to the President for Global Affairs, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, and Special Advisor to the President for Cyber Security. Prior to his White House years, Mr. Clarke served for 19 years in the Pentagon, the Intelligence Community, and State Department. During the Reagan Administration, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence. During the Bush (41) Administration, he was Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs and coordinated diplomatic efforts to support the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the subsequent security arrangements.*

*Robert K. Knake is a Director at Good Harbor Consulting where he specializes in homeland security and critical infrastructure protection. Mr. Knake joined Good Harbor after completing a master's degree in international security studies at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Prior to his graduate studies, Mr. Knake was a research associate in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. He received his BA in History and Government from Connecticut College in 2001.*



## U.S. Security Assistance to the Philippines: A Success Story Against Terrorism

By Peter Chalk

THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES currently constitutes a main focus of U.S. concern regarding terrorism and trans-border militant threats, with American diplomats darkly referring to the region as the “new Afghanistan.” The wider Mindanao area has not only been connected to numerous high-profile terrorist attacks that have taken place since 9/11—both within and beyond the Philippines—but it has also been identified as an increasingly important hub for leading members of the so-called pro-bombing faction of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Although several extremist entities exist in the southern Philippines, it is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG, or “Bearer of the Sword”) that Washington generally considers to represent the principal terrorist threat to its own strategic and security interests. Accordingly, the thrust of foreign military security assistance to Manila has been directed toward vitiating the operational tempo of the ASG—an effort that, at this point, has met with some relatively significant results.

### The Abu Sayyaf Group

The ASG was founded on Basilan Island in 1991 under the leadership of Ustadz Abdurajak Janjalini, a former member of the Filipino Muslim Brigade that fought Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Originally known as al-Harakat al-Islamiyah, the group has stated its goals as the eradication of all Christian influence in the southern Philippines and the creation of an Islamic State of Mindanao (MIS) whose “nature, meaning, emblem and objective are basic to peace.”<sup>1</sup>

1 These objectives were first set forth in an undated ASG proclamation, the “Surah I-al Fatiha,” that professed to refute the false lies and insults hurled at the Islamic religion by Christians and to liberate Mindanao from the clutches of oppression, tyranny and injustice as experienced under the Catholic-dominated Philippine government and military. Despite these pronouncements, the ASG has never articulated a clear strategic plan for how it would actually establish a pure Islamic state in the southern Philippines or, indeed, prepare local Muslims for home rule. “Abu Sayyaf Group Profile,” unpublished document supplied to the author by the International Political Violence Terrorism Research Center (IPVTRC), Institute of Defense and Strategic

Although Janjalini originally created his movement as one predicated on the localized imperative of establishing an MIS, he quickly tied this objective to the regional and global supremacy of Islam through armed struggle. Toward that end, the ASG paralleled its anti-Christian agenda in Mindanao with an effort to establish logistical and operational links with external terrorist groups.<sup>2</sup> Concrete evidence of these transnational ambitions first emerged in 1995 when five ASG cells were directly implicated in *Oplan Bonjinka*—a multi-pronged plot aimed at assassinating the Pope and U.S. President Bill Clinton, bombing Washington’s embassies in Manila and Bangkok and sabotaging U.S. commercial airliners flying trans-Pacific routes from American West Coast cities. The plan was hatched by Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the 1993 attack against the World Trade Center in New York, and was only foiled when volatile explosive compounds ignited a fire in the apartment he was renting in Manila.<sup>3</sup>

The fervor of the ASG’s Islamic agenda—both domestic and international—began to atrophy in the wake of the discovery of *Bonjinka*, a process that gathered pace rapidly three years later when Janjalini was killed in a shootout with Philippine police on Basilan Island. At the time, this latter event proved to be a defining moment in the ASG’s evolutionary history, triggering a leadership crisis that was followed by the loss of ideological direction and a subsequent process of factionalization that effectively saw the group degenerate into a loosely configured but highly ruthless Kidnap-for-Extortion (KFR) syndicate.<sup>4</sup>

Studies (IDSS), Singapore, January 12, 2006.

2 Personal interviews, police and military intelligence officials, Manila, March 2005.

3 For more on *Oplan Bonjinka*, see “Asia’s Own Osama,” *Time*, April 1, 2002; Anthony Spaeth, “Rumbles in the Jungle,” *Time*, March 4, 2002; “Disparate Pieces of Puzzle Fit Together,” *Washington Post*, September 23, 2001; “Muslim Militants Threaten Ramos Vision of Summit Glory,” *The Australian*, January 13, 1996; and “The Man Who Wasn’t There,” *Time*, February 20, 1995.

4 A number of these kidnappings proved to be highly profitable. Abductions of several Western tourists in the first half of 2000, for instance, are believed to have netted ASG an estimated \$20 million in ransom payments. See “No More Ransoms,” *Economist*, June 2, 2001; Seth Maydans, “Libyan Aid Helps to Free Hostages Held in the Philippines,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2001; and Deidre Sheehan, “Buying Trouble,” *The Far Eastern*

The criminal disaggregation of the ASG, however, proved to be only short lived. Beginning in 2003, concerted attempts were made to re-energize the group as an integrated and credible Islamic force. The bulk of these efforts were coordinated under the combined auspices of Khadaffi Janjalini (the younger brother of Abdurajak) and Jainal Antel Sali (also known as Abu Solaiman, a self-proclaimed ASG spokesman), both of

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whom sought to return the group to its militant jihadist origins following the arrests and killings of several leading bandit commanders. Notably, these included Ghalib Andang (also known as “Komander Robot”) and Aldam Tilao (also known as Abu Sabaya), two domineering personalities who had orchestrated many of the earlier KFR operations claimed in the group’s name.<sup>5</sup> Although now dead, the influence of Khadaffy and Solaiman<sup>6</sup> has been significant in reorienting the tactical and strategic direction of the ASG. The group now routinely refers to itself by its original nomenclature—al-Harakat al-Islamiyah—and, under the direction of Commander Radullan Sahiron (who, in the absence of a nominated *amir*, now acts as the *de facto* leader of the organization),<sup>7</sup>

*Economic Review*, September 7, 2000.

5 Andang was killed while trying to escape from jail in March 2005; Tilao was shot in an offshore gun battle in Mindanao in June 2001. The latter was behind the sensational abduction of 20 hostages from the resort island of Palawan in May 2001, including Americans Martin and Gracia Burnham. For an interesting account of this episode and the events leading up to Tilao’s eventual death, see Mark Bowden, “Jihadists in Paradise,” *The Atlantic* (March 2007).

6 Khadaffy died after sustaining serious injuries during a firefight with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on September 4, 2006. Solaiman was killed by a Special Forces unit on January 16, 2007. Zachary Abuza, “On the Defensive: Rebels Lose Ground in the Southern Philippines,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (April 2007).

7 At the time of writing, the ASG had not announced a nominated *amir* to succeed Khadaffy Janjalini largely because an accepted consensus candidate who retained both theological and military credibility had not been

has enshrined the concept of a wider Islamic state in Mindanao as the basis of its ideological agenda.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the group has steadily scaled back its lucrative KFR activities in favor of a more directed focus on hitting high-profile civilian and Western targets in major metropolitan areas. Some of the more notable attacks and plots attributed to the organization in recent years include:

- The 2004 firebombing of Philippine *SuperFerry 14* (which resulted in 116 deaths and remains the most destructive act of maritime terrorism to date).
- A series of coordinated explosions that took place in Davao City, General Santos City and Manila in February 2005 (the so-called “Valentine’s Day” bombings).
- Preempted strikes on several venues popular with foreign tourists and businessmen in Makati City that had been planned for March 2005.
- The bombing of a crowded supermarket on the southern island of Jolo in March 2006.
- Three simultaneous attacks on the sites hosting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian regional summits in January 2007.<sup>9</sup>

Arguably more importantly, the ASG has sought to consolidate ties with the pro-bombing faction of JI—which currently represents the most significant and dangerous jihadist entity in Southeast

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identified. Sahiron (also known as Commander Putol) is the closest that the group has to such an individual. He is old (in his 70s), however, and suffers from acute diabetes. The other potential *amir*, Isnilon Hapilon (also known as Salahuddin), is from the Yakan tribe, which is not acceptable to the Tausugs. Personal interviews, AFP officials, Zamboanga, January 2008.

8 Personal interviews, police and military officials and security analysts, Manila, January 2008.

9 Anthony Davis, “Philippines Fears New Wave of Attacks by Abu Sayyaf Group,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (May 2005); Abuza, “On the Defensive: Rebels Lose Ground in Southern Philippines”; “4 More Suspects in V-Day Bombings Nabbed,” ABS-CBN News, February 23, 2005; “Car Bombing Plot Foiled, Says AFP,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 30, 2005; Tarra Quismundo and Donna Pazzibugan, “Bomb Found Outside Makati Bldg,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 28, 2005; Jim Gomez, “Extremist Groups in Philippines Are Forming Alliances,” Associated Press, March 12, 2005; “Captured Indonesian Suspect: ASG Plans to Bomb Crowded Places in Central Manila,” FBI, March 24, 2005; “Bomb Rocks Philippines Ahead of Summits,” *USA Today*, January 11, 2007; “Blast Hits Southern Philippines,” BBC News, March 27, 2006.

Asia—acting as the main vehicle for furthering its operational and logistical activities in Mindanao. Intelligence sources in the Philippines confirm that militants associated with the bloc continue to pass through areas under ASG control and that at least three of the most wanted men in Southeast Asia are now based in Patikul under the group’s protection: Joko Pitono (also known as Dulmatin), Umar Patek and Marwan (also known as Manobo).<sup>10</sup>

#### The U.S. Dimension

The United States clearly views the ASG as posing a direct threat to a highly important ally in Southeast Asia. The present Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration constitutes one of the most ardent supporters of President George W. Bush’s global war on terrorism that in addition to complementing regional American politico-strategic policies also remains crucial to legitimating U.S. basing options in the wider Asia-Pacific. Moreover, the Philippines is part and parcel of a highly dynamic East Asian economic hub that offers vibrant export markets, long-term

### **“In addition to FMF, Manila continues to be one of the principal recipients of Department of Defense (DoD) International Military Education and Training (IMET) support.”**

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energy supplies (especially in the form of oil and liquefied natural gas) and crucial sea lines of communication for maritime trade. The emergence of a concerted jihadist beachhead in Mindanao would not only negatively impact the general stability of the Philippines and its neighbors, but it would place under pressure existing bilateral and multilateral relations that are emerging as a key component of Washington’s post-9/11 national and international

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10 Personal interviews, AFP officials, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008. These three individuals are considered especially dangerous in terms of IED construction given their respective proficiencies: Marwan and military ordinance; Patek and chemicals; and Dulmatin and electronics.

security strategy. These considerations have caused Washington to place a premium on supporting Manila with a robust program of international defense and security assistance. Instituted through the Joint United States Military Assistance Group-Philippines (JUSMAG-P), the essential thrust of this backing is to enhance American-Filipino military interoperability in order to deny and defeat the terrorist threat emanating from the ASG.<sup>11</sup>

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is now the largest benefactor of the Pentagon’s Foreign Military Financing (FMF) budget,<sup>12</sup> which grew from zero between 1994 and 1998 to \$9 million in 2004, \$11 million in 2005, \$12 million in 2006 and \$13 million in 2007.<sup>13</sup> The bulk of this money has been used to promote defense reform and underwrite the logistics for ongoing counter-terrorism efforts in the southern Philippines through 10 priority programs: Multi Year Defense Planning System; Intelligence, Operations and Training; Logistics; Professional Development; Professional Management; Capability Upgrade Program; Budget and Management; Defense Acquisition System; Strategic Communication; and Information Management.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to FMF, Manila continues to be one of the principal recipients of Department of Defense (DoD) International Military Education and Training (IMET) support. The main purpose of this assistance is to sponsor serving officers of the AFP to undertake Professional

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11 Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) and United States Defense Representative (USDR) Philippines briefing, Manila, January 15, 2008.

12 FMF essentially consists of a trust fund that is set up in recipient countries and which is administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Money is deposited into the trust and used to purchase American defense articles and services as provided through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales system. Funds mostly pay for hardware and technical training, although a certain amount is also employed to promote defense reform in recipient countries.

13 Personal interview, U.S. State Department (USSD) officials, Washington, D.C., December 2007. See also Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier, *Mindanao: A Gamble Worth Taking* (Sydney: Lowy Institute Paper 14, 2007), p. 44.

14 Personal interview, AFP officials, Manila, January 2008; Philippine Defense Reform briefing, Manila, January 15, 2008.

Military Education (PME) in the United States. The hope is that by attending these courses, participants will not only gain a thorough grounding in macro areas such as rules of engagement, human rights awareness, international military law and legal aspects of peacekeeping operations (that will then be disseminated back to their home units and institutions), but will also build solid cooperative relationships with their American counterparts.<sup>15</sup> In 2007, \$2.75 million was allocated to the Philippines in IMET funds; covering the PME costs for 146 students, this made it one of the largest programs of its kind currently run by Washington anywhere in the world.<sup>16</sup>

On a more directed combat level, several hundred U.S. personnel deployed as part of JUSMAG-P's Joint Special Operations Taskforce Philippines (JSOTF-P) are providing comprehensive counter-terrorism training to all relevant AFP elements involved in the fight against the ASG.<sup>17</sup> Principally aimed at Special Forces, Scout Ranger and Marine Corps battalions as well as several army reconnaissance companies, modules mainly focus on operations intelligence fusion, unit interoperability, logistics and aspects of engineering, equipment and maintenance. Although U.S. troops are barred from actually engaging in active hostile actions (which is prohibited under the Philippines' constitution), they do participate in annual counter-terrorism exercises with the AFP to test and audit imparted techniques, procedures and practices. Known as *Balikatan* (literally "shoulder-to-shoulder"), these drills have been ongoing since 2002. The latest

round is scheduled for February-March 2008 and will be devoted exclusively to civil military operations in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the DoD (which remains the principal source of security backing to Manila), at least two other federal government bureaucracies are currently working to boost counter-terrorism efforts in the Philippines. The first is the U.S. State Department, which provides an average of between \$1 and \$1.5 million every year in International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) support.<sup>19</sup> Most of these monies are being used to enhance the forensic capabilities of the national police and help build a more comprehensive legal framework for charging and prosecuting those implicated in terrorist crimes (a Resident Legal Adviser Program is active to further buttress this latter endeavor). The State Department has also earmarked \$5 million in 1207 funds<sup>20</sup> to promote domain awareness and capacity building in the maritime realm as part of a wider effort to augment security in the Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia (MALPHINDO) tri-border region.<sup>21</sup>

18 Personal interviews, AFP officials, Zamboanga and Manila, January 2008. *Balikatan 08* will exercise eight medical civil action programs (MEDCAPS) and four engineering civic action programs (ENCAPS); MEDCAPS will involve 15 AFP personnel/project, ENCAPS 20 AFP personnel/project.

19 It should be noted that the USSD also works with the Department of Justice in supporting an International Criminal Investigative Training Program in the Philippines. This is a relatively minor effort that consists mostly of sponsoring courses for selected PNP personnel to attend courses on crime scene investigation, community policing and instructor development. Director General Oscar Calderon, *Philippine National Police: One-Year Report* (Manila, Camp Crame: Philippine National Police, 2007), p. 19.

20 Although 1207 funds are DoD sourced, the program uses defense dollars to perform a USSD function, with State acting as the ultimate arbiter of how these monies are distributed and employed.

21 Personal interviews, DoD and USSD officials, Washington, D.C., December 2007 and Australian and Philippine Navy officials, Manila, January 2008. Most of the effort in terms of promoting Philippine maritime capacity building is focusing on Coast Watch South (CWS)—an interagency project patterned after the offshore monitoring and surveillance system that is employed in Australia. The Philippine version will involve setting up surveillance and interdiction stations across Mindanao to cover the whole gambit of maritime threats in zones around the country's so-called "southern back door." These stations will be tied into a

Second is USAID, which is the main agency responsible for distributing and overseeing development assistance to the Philippines. Many of its programs are undertaken in direct conjunction with the Defense Department and focus on using "soft power" to alleviate poverty and unemployment, both of which are regarded as powerful drivers—if not root causes—for militant extremism in Mindanao. The main thrust of these endeavors, which are instituted through the Growth and Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program, has been to foster small-scale community infrastructure projects that are liable to have an immediate impact on civilians' day-to-day lives such as the construction of manual water pumps, sanitation systems and market access roads and the promotion of local fish farms and collective business cooperatives.<sup>22</sup> In 2006, JUSMAG-P started channeling these development efforts through U.S. military forces stationed in the south, which has ensured that GEM initiatives are now systematically coordinated with U.S. security troops and implemented in areas that can be quarantined from attack and sabotage by militant entities.<sup>23</sup>

#### Assessment of U.S. Defense and Security Assistance

The U.S. defense and security assistance program has paid dividends in a number of respects. Operationally, there is little doubt that the AFP has benefited from FMF funding and JSOTF-P training. This is perhaps best reflected by the military's successes against the ASG in Mindanao. The group is currently estimated to

central command post—to be known as the Maritime Information and Coordination Center (MICC)—that will provide fusion for intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination. The MICC will be staffed by interagency personnel and headed by the AFP (which will provide the initial seed money for underwriting the start-up costs for CWS). The current development plan for the system is split between an initial Implementation Phase (lasting 0-3 years), an Integration Phase (lasting 2-6 years) and a Full Mission Capable Phase (lasting 5-9 years). An Executive Order for implementing the first phase has already been drafted and should be ready for presidential signature before the end of the first quarter in 2008.

22 Personal interviews, DoD officials, Washington, D.C., December 2007. See also Cook and Collier, *Mindanao: A Gamble Worth Taking*, p. 44.

23 Glenda Gloria, "War Without End: The Military is Treading on Dangerous Ground with its Counterinsurgency Experiments," *Newsbreak*, December 2007-February 2008, p. 38.

15 Former Secretary of State Colin Powell once remarked that, dollar for dollar, IMET was one of the most effective security assistance programs run by the U.S. government.

16 Personal interviews, USSD officials, Washington, D.C., 2007 and Manila, January 2008. Worldwide, roughly 125 countries receive IMET funding. In Southeast Asia, the main established programs are with the Philippines and Indonesia; smaller arrangements have been concluded with Cambodia, East Timor, Laos, Malaysia and Thailand (although at the time of writing all military assistance to Bangkok had been frozen as a result of the September 2006 military coup that ousted the civilian administration of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra).

17 JSOTF-P training missions are currently being headquartered out of Camp Aguinaldo in Manila, Camp Navarro in Zamboanga and Camp Bautista in Jolo. JUSMAG and USSD briefing, Manila, January 15, 2008.



have around 380 fighters, most of whom are scattered in small pockets across Jolo Island in Sulu Province. This is a substantial reduction from the 1,270 cadres that were thought to have made up the organization at the height of its strength in 2000.<sup>24</sup> Several high-value ASG targets—defined as leading/mid-level commanders overseeing at least six cadres—have also been neutralized. Apart from the aforementioned Khadaffi Janjalini and Abu Solaiman, these have included Jundam Jamalul (also known as “Black Killer”), Borhan Mundus, Abdullah Abas, Jamal Taib, Abdul Yebnon, Binang Sali (also known as Sali), Muskin Ahaddin (also known as Hussein), Ibrahim (also known as Muksin), Gufran (also known as Abu Samur) and Abdul Sakandal (also known as “Boy Negro”).<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, there are signs that defense reform within the AFP is being institutionalized and taking on the type of self-sustaining character that is necessary for achieving long-term, systematic change. The government is now committing approximately five billion pesos (\$125 million) over five years of its own funds to further the process of internal security capability building and in 2005 drafted its first formal plan for guiding future defense asset prioritization and procurement.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, significant steps are being taken to root out corruption and inculcate an ethos of military professionalism through a so-called “honorable warrior” initiative. This innovative program, which is run by the AFP’s J7, singles out members of the armed forces deployed

to Mindanao who have served with distinction and who have been active in promoting action against human rights abuses, graft, embezzlement and other questionable practices. The scheme has been particularly instrumental in eliciting the support of the public in general counter-terrorism efforts by visibly demonstrating that the security forces are respectful of human rights and fully committed to safeguarding the interests of the local population.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, on a law enforcement front, the police now have at their disposal a nascent but growing computer-based system for storing and cross-referencing forensic information, which should help to substantially boost the evidentiary basis and credibility of Philippine National Police (PNP) cases brought to trial.<sup>28</sup> A new anti-terrorism law—officially known as the Human Security Act (HAS)—was also passed in January 2007, which has been hailed as an important development in further equipping the state with the necessary legal tools to address violent political extremism. The legislation not only provides a statutory basis for defining and proscribing terrorist acts, but it also underwrites a range of extrajudicial surveillance and arrest powers for the police.<sup>29</sup> It is true that the PNP has been somewhat reluctant to fully embrace the HSA due to clauses that sanction extremely severe penalties in the event that the act is judged to have been employed inappropriately.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, active

steps are being undertaken to modify the prohibitive provisions of the HSA, and sources in Manila are confident that a revised and more “balanced” version will be ready for signature before the end of 2008.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that one of the main factors accounting for the success of U.S. security aid in the Philippines is the regularity by which military reform and modernization is brought up in bilateral official relations—a frequency that clearly reflects the perceived importance the country has to U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in Southeast Asia. Equally as significant, however, is the fact that Manila has heard the message, accepted that it needs help and has taken ownership of the problem by endorsing the provision of comprehensive support and assistance packages.<sup>32</sup> In a region that continues to jealously guard the dual principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs,<sup>33</sup> this represents a major and willing departure from the norm, the salience of which should not be underestimated.

*Dr. Peter Chalk is a Senior Policy Analyst with the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California. In addition to this position he serves as an Adjunct Professor with the Postgraduate Naval School in Monterey, California and the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii. Apart from his professional affiliations, he acts as Associate Editor of Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, one of the foremost journals in the international security field.*

24 AFP J2 briefing given to author, Manila, January 2008. See also Barbara Dacanay, “Joint Effort Clips Insurgents’ Wings,” *Gulf News*, January 8, 2008.

25 Personal interviews, AFP officials and security analysts, Manila, January 2008. The high rate of captures arguably also reflects the success of the U.S.-funded Rewards for Justice Program, which provides financial incentives to encourage the public to voluntarily work with the authorities and supply them with information that is relevant to the movement and whereabouts of extremist high-value targets.

26 Personal interviews, USSD officials, Washington, D.C., December 2007 and AFP officials, Manila, January 2008. It should be noted that Manila conceives defense reform as necessary to address the whole gambit of internal security threats that it currently confronts and not merely the challenge emanating from the ASG. Indeed, the government presently counts the New People’s Army communist insurgency, not Islamist terrorism, as its number one priority.

27 Personal interview, U.S. Special Forces liaison officer, Manila, November 2005.

28 Conviction rates are notoriously low in the Philippines, largely because the police have tended to base their cases on unsubstantiated (and, hence, legally unreliable) eyewitness accounts and confessions rather than solid physical evidence.

29 The HSA provides the government with an explicit authority to imprison all persons who commit an act punishable under the provisions of the Revised Penal Code if the purpose is explicitly designed to sow and create “a condition of widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace in order to coerce the government to give into an unlawful demand.” Congress of the Philippines, *An Act to Secure the State and Protect Our People from Terrorism* (Republic Act No. 9372), Thirteenth Congress, Third Special Session, February 19, 2007.

30 Personal interviews, PNP and Western officials, Manila, January 2008. Penalties for unauthorized, malicious or inappropriate use of the HSA include both imprisonment (to a maximum of 12 years) and financial compensation. In the latter case, any individual who is

charged with a terrorist offense and then acquitted has the right to demand 500,000 pesos (\$125) for each day that he/she was held—the cost of which is personally borne by the arresting officer.

31 Personal interview, National Security Council officials, Manila, January 2008.

32 Personal interviews, DoD and USSD officials, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

33 Sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs are the two main procedural norms that govern policy and decision-making in both ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum.



## Takeovers of Moderate Muslim Institutions: Radical Islamist Tactics at the Local Level

By Madeleine Gruen

THE SUCCESS OF RADICAL Islamists in spreading extremist doctrine has been a largely uncontested battle in the ongoing war on terrorism. As long as extremist groups are able to circulate their doctrine without challenge, radicalization will occur, and new threats will be generated indefinitely. In order to achieve their ultimate objectives, extremist groups and movements operating in the United States continually seek to expand their spheres of influence by seizing control of Islamic organizations and institutions from moderate Muslims.

In most cases, extremist groups successfully take over moderate Islamic institutions without breaking any laws. Therefore, any conflict between those who previously occupied the venue and the extremist infiltrators is considered a civil matter and not a criminal situation

**“In most cases, extremist groups successfully take over moderate Islamic institutions without breaking any laws.”**

that would require law enforcement intervention. Indeed, it is not the role of U.S. law enforcement to police ideological perspectives. Nevertheless, as law enforcement agencies continue to develop an understanding of extremist group strategies and tactics, they will recognize patterns that indicate the ongoing development of power bases by radical Islamist groups is deliberate and methodical, and that the success of these groups will create a problematic future brought on by the increase in radicalized individuals within their jurisdictions.

### Case Studies of Takeovers

To satisfy their requirement to access an audience that is potentially receptive to their message, and to increase their power over the local community and

its resources, radical Islamist groups position themselves in mosques, student associations and community centers. Such bases of operations enhance the capabilities of extremist groups by allowing them direct control of communications resources, such as institution newsletters and websites. They may also gain new sources of income as a result of more direct access to businesses operated by worshippers or association members, and to the charitable donations made by the institution's patrons. Control over an institution means ideological control of the message delivered to its members and the ability to set agendas and choose speakers for educational programs and public activities. In other words, they can create an atmosphere in which their audience will be isolated from any other perspective but that of the radical Islamist group that occupies the seat of control. These conditions are undesirable not only to the greater community, which will run a higher risk of suffering a terrorist attack perpetrated by a homegrown cell or by lone actors, but also to the moderate Muslim community, which finds it difficult to defend itself against radical Islamist takeovers.

Extremist group tactics play out similarly in almost all publicly reported cases of takeover bids. Newcomers arrive who are highly educated and are intellectually persuasive as they talk politics at every opportunity or when admonishing others to practice Islam according to the most literal interpretation. They plant seeds of suspicion among the institution's patrons, perhaps suggesting that the current leadership is embezzling from the community's financial reserves. They discredit the leadership, hoping that lack of confidence will lead to discord. They are dynamic, energetic and eventually persuade people to join their side. Once they have achieved enough support, they will challenge for control of the board of directors and other key positions of responsibility. Ultimately, they will dictate the rules and set the agenda. Those who disagree will either be pushed to leave the institution or forced to put up with the extremist doctrine and watch silently as friends, colleagues and fellow worshippers embrace the radical ideology.

### The Takeover of the Morgantown Mosque

The Morgantown mosque in West Virginia was too small to have its own imam. Instead, the governing board determined who would lead prayers and deliver sermons.<sup>1</sup> One Friday in 2004, a Wahhabi-influenced student from West Virginia University delivered the sermon. His message was acerbic, telling the moderate congregation that to love the Prophet Muhammad is to “hate those who hate him” and that the

**“Indeed, it is not the role of U.S. law enforcement to police ideological perspectives.”**

“enemies of Islam” are those who do not practice it in the strictest form. When the board of directors disintegrated due to infighting, the West Virginia University student who had delivered the sermon, and several other radical students from the university, stepped in to take over five vacant spots on the board. Control of the board gave them control of the mosque, which meant control over the ideological discourse that took place in the mosque from that point forward. Most of their sermons came directly from [www.alminbar.com](http://www.alminbar.com), a Saudi-based, English-language website that specializes in providing subject matter material for sermons for those who do not have proper religious training. Al-Minbar's suggested topics include the United States and its “dirty war against Islam,” and “the only way to defeat the Jews is by jihad.” Anyone in the Morgantown mosque who found this genre of topic distasteful and who confronted the new leadership about it was socially ostracized. Eventually, the extremists' control went unchallenged and was absolute.

What are the indicators that a mosque, or any other Islamic establishment, is in the hands of extremists? Asra Nomani, who bravely exposed the takeover of the Morgantown mosque in the *New York Times*, says that one can tell from the instant the extremists set foot in the establishment.<sup>2</sup> Nomani says that there

<sup>1</sup> Asra Q. Nomani, “Hate at the Local Mosque,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview, Asra Nomani, January 16, 2008.

are physical indicators: “Are the women worshipping in the same room as the men, or are they secreted behind curtains at the back of the room? Do those who lead the sermons encourage or reject relationships with people of other faiths? Are the men rolling their pants up over their ankles?”<sup>3</sup>

**“Unfortunately, law enforcement cannot tackle the problem alone; agencies must rely on the cooperation of the Muslim community, which is equally concerned by the presence of radical Islamists.”**

There are a different set of indicators when political Islamists are present; an observer will likely see politics become a more important topic than culture or religion. Nomani says that any of these indicators are like a canary in a coal mine, and although they are not a sure signal of trouble to come, they are all attitudes that exist in radicalizing environments.

#### **The Takeover of University Islamic Societies in the UK and U.S.**

The infiltration of Muslim university campus associations by extremist groups may be as commonplace in the United States as it is in the United Kingdom, although the phenomenon is not reported in the U.S. media to the extent it is in Britain. One explanation for this might be that the extremist groups operating in the United States have never operated as openly as they have been able to in the United Kingdom. U.S.-based extremist groups have operated behind fronts and covers so successfully that their target recruitment and indoctrination populations are often unaware of any affiliations to known radical Islamic groups. Therefore, while American Muslim students might not like the ideological perspective of the president of their student association, there is no apparent sponsoring organization at which they can point their finger.

In the United Kingdom, however, even though political Islamist groups like Hizb al-Tahrir (HT, often spelled Hizb ut-Tahrir) have been banned on university campuses, they continue to penetrate Muslim student associations by using covers. HT's covers are usually blown fairly quickly by savvy British students, who are well aware of HT's doctrines due to the group's highly public profile in the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, by the time of the discovery HT has usually managed to parlay its position within the Muslim student society to influence its members. HT is alleged to have had a “stranglehold” on the Islamic Society of Bradford University in Yorkshire, which not only gave them control over the choice of speakers who attended the society's meetings, but also over the imams who delivered the Friday prayers.<sup>4</sup> A former member of HT, who is also a Bradford University student, said,

The issue with HT is not that it exposes people to violent ideologies *per se*, but rather that it creates a worldview in which it is normal to see the world divided into camps of “us” versus “them.” This creates a fairly easy jumping off point to the world of violent ideas, which is the real danger.<sup>5</sup>

On occasion, a single group will have a complete monopoly over a student association; however, it is more common to see several extremist groups present. As students pass through the university, the profiles of the campus student associations tend to change. An Islamic society that was considered a hotbed of radicalization two years ago may have been passed on to a more moderate leadership; however, the university Muslim student associations are prized targets for control by extremists because they are the most ideal place to reach their primary demographic for recruitment and indoctrination.

#### **The Takeover of Abu Bakr Masjid**

Shaykh Umar `Abd al-Rahman, the former leader of al-Jama`a al-Islamiyya, arrived in New York City in May 1990 and immediately continued his long-time effort to topple the Egyptian government

and its supporter, the United States. `Abd al-Rahman's supporters in New York set the stage for him to take the pulpit in three area mosques, including Brooklyn's Abu Bakr, whose worshippers were mostly middle class Egyptian immigrants who did not subscribe to `Abd al-Rahman's ideology. `Abd al-Rahman's supporters were immediately apparent to the moderate congregants—they were extremely political, speaking almost exclusively about Egyptian politics and holy war against the Egyptian regime.

During prayer meetings, `Abd al-Rahman's men aggressively challenged the moderate imam's credibility and successfully undermined his control so that when `Abd al-Rahman was brought into Abu Bakr it was easy for his supporters to put him at the pulpit. Many of the younger members of the congregation preferred `Abd al-Rahman's fiery style to the old imam's dry delivery,<sup>6</sup> and within six months of his arrival `Abd al-Rahman's supporters were in the

**“As law enforcement becomes more aware of the phenomenon, they will become a more sympathetic and able partner to the Muslim community.”**

majority, making it possible for them to assume control of the mosque's board of trustees. With control over the board, it became nearly impossible for anyone to organize `Abd al-Rahman's ouster. As a result, worshippers were either forced to listen to his furious calls for jihad or leave the mosque. To `Abd al-Rahman and his supporters, it did not matter how many of the congregants left the mosque; it was their intention to maintain an audience only with those who would be most receptive to jihadist ideology.

It is reasonable to conclude that `Abd al-Rahman's high-profile presence served as a lightning rod to those who were attracted to his style and to his ideology, and it is likely that his reputation inspired

<sup>4</sup> Tom Smithard, “University Islamic Society Front for Militants,” *Yorkshire Post*, January 15, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Waldman, “Fiery Muslim Preaching Jihad in the U.S. Mosques Faces Uncertain Future,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

supporters to give money and other forms of assistance to his cause. Had his presence in New York been limited to a Brooklyn apartment and an office in Jersey City, his scope of influence would likely have been far more limited.

### Conclusion and Lessons for Law Enforcement

Although U.S. law enforcement agencies have made consistent and effective efforts to thwart terrorist operations at the tactical level, a more holistic counter-terrorism strategy is desired, one which should include measures to detect and disrupt opportunities for extremist groups to radicalize domestic Muslim populations. Unfortunately, law enforcement cannot tackle the problem alone; agencies must rely on the cooperation of the Muslim community, which is equally concerned by the presence of radical Islamists. As the aforementioned case studies demonstrate, laws are generally not broken during the process of an extremist takeover. Disputes between factions in an Islamic establishment are usually civil issues. Yet, because most law enforcement agencies have developed positive relationships with special interest groups within their jurisdictions, there is a greater possibility that they will be notified of a negative presence. With training, law enforcement agencies will be able to recognize the signs of radical Islamist infiltration in their jurisdictions when they cannot count on being notified by members of the community. As law enforcement becomes more aware of the phenomenon, they will become a more sympathetic and able partner to the Muslim community. An increase in understanding will lead to enhanced cooperation, and, in the event that a crime is committed, a complaint will be made faster and with a greater level of trust and comfort.

*Madeleine Gruen is an intelligence analyst who works with law enforcement. Her research on Hizb al-Tahrir, radicalization and indoctrination tactics has been published widely. Ms. Gruen is a master's degree candidate at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.*

## Radical Madrasas in Southeast Asia

By Scott Atran, Justin Magouirk and Jeremy Ginges

SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS in the United States, United Kingdom and France, among other countries, have repeatedly voiced concerns about the threat to world security posed by Islamic schools that allegedly teach hate and murder. In 2005, Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey published an op-ed with the *New York Times* on "The Madrassah Myth," where they argued that most *madrasas*, or Islamic boarding schools, are moderate and are not associated with terrorism and political violence. After examining some high-profile attacks, they surmised that:

While madrassas are an important issue in education and development in the Muslim world, they are not and should not be considered a threat to the United States. The tens of millions of dollars spent every year by the United States through the State Department, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, and the Agency for International Development to improve education and literacy in the Middle East and South Asia should be applauded as the development aid it is and not as the counterterrorism effort it cannot be.

In an extension of this argument in *The Washington Quarterly*,<sup>1</sup> Bergen and Pandey conclude that we must eliminate the "assumption that madrassas produce terrorists capable of carrying out major attacks" in order to "shape more effective policies to ensure national security."

Overall, this analysis is a welcome respite from the rash rhetoric that often characterizes responses to terrorist attacks such as 9/11 and the 2005 London Underground bombings. Yet, in attempting to rectify the typical hysterical media responses to *madrasas*, the argument may go too far.

1 Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* 29 (Spring 2006): pp. 117-125.

### The Role of Radical Madrasas in Terrorist Attacks

It is true that most *madrasas* are peaceful and serve a constructive role in societies where education is often a privilege rather than a right, and where, as in Pakistan, the state has increasingly released mass education and student welfare to *madrasas* as it continues to spend many times more on the military.<sup>2</sup> Yet this overlooks the fact that elsewhere, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, *madrasas* such as al-Mukmin, Lukman al-Hakim and al-Islam have been vitally important in furthering the mission of some of the most volatile terrorist groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), in efforts to attack American, Australian and other Western-related interests. In fact, the majority of JI terrorist attacks—including the Christmas Eve bombings of 2000 and Bali I in 2002, as well as the Jakarta Marriott bombing in 2003 and the Australian Embassy attack in 2004 (which involved JI members but were not institutionally JI)—have been staffed and led by individuals associated with radical *madrasas*.

To explore these competing claims and to address the *madrasa* question systematically, data was recently analyzed from the ongoing Global Transnational Terrorism (GTT) Project.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the findings demonstrate that attendance and other forms of association (teaching, socializing or attending lectures) with JI-linked radical *madrasas* are correlated with both participation and role in JI terrorist attacks. By using aggregate level data on Indonesian education rates, it is clear that JI-linked *madrasa* attendance rates of the jihadists that took part in the Bali I, Marriott and Australian Embassy bombings are 19 times greater than the highest estimated rates of the general population. Using an ordered logit statistical analysis of 75 jihadists involved in the same operations, we found that JI-linked *madrasa* attendance is associated with a greater role in JI terrorist operations, decreasing the

2 Even before September 11, the ratio of defense spending to health and education spending in Pakistan was 239:1. See Stephen Burgess, "Struggle for Control of Pakistan," in Barry Schneider and Jerrold Post eds., *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Collingdale, PA: Diane Publishing Company, 2004).

3 Undertaken in collaboration with Marc Sageman and Dominick Wright, and under the auspices of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research.



probability that a jihadist will take a low level role on a terrorist operation by more than 19% and increasing the probability that a jihadist will play a major role by 16%.<sup>4</sup>

Data was also analyzed from structured interviews with more than 100 students in four Indonesian *madrasas* (*pesantren*, or boarding schools) to attempt to explain these associations, and striking correlations were found between unusual belief systems and radicalization. Two of the schools, Darussalam and al-Husainy, are associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), or Revival of Islamic Scholars, a mass movement that had originally played a key role in the fight for independence against Dutch rule and which is associated with a traditional and non-dogmatic Indonesian form of Islam influenced by Balinese Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufi mystical beliefs. One school, Ibnu Mas'ud, is funded by the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), or Council of Indonesian Holy Warriors, an Islamist coalition whose goal is to convert Indonesia into a strict Sunni state ruled by Shari'a law.<sup>5</sup> The remaining school, al-Islam (in Tengulun, East Java), was

**“At al-Islam, 74% of the students (compared to seven percent of the students at other schools) believed that all people ‘were born evil but some learn to become good.’”**

established in 1992 by the father of three of the main Bali bombing plotters (Ali Imron, Amrozi and Mukhlas) and modeled on the famous al-Mukmin school in Ngruki (Solo, Central Java) created by JI founder Abdullah Sungkar and his colleague Abu Bakr Ba'asyir. After Sungkar's death in 1999, Ba'asyir became al-Islam's patron and officiated at graduation ceremonies. After the Bali bombing, Ba'asyir said that he believed the victims of the bombing would go to hell,<sup>6</sup> and that the bombers

and plotters were heroic mujahidin.<sup>7</sup>

After exploring attitudes toward Islam and other religions, no significant differences between the NU and MMI schools were found, whereas al-Islam stood apart on a variety of measures.<sup>8</sup> At al-Islam, 91% of the students (compared to 35% of students at the other *madrasas*) believed that it was their duty as Muslims “to fight and kill non-Muslims such as Christians.”<sup>9</sup> At al-Islam, 74% of the students (compared to seven percent of the students at other schools) believed that all people “were born evil but some learn to become good.”<sup>10</sup> Across all schools, students who believed people are “born evil” were about 11 times more likely to believe it was their duty to kill non-Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

Students were also asked to imagine what would happen if a child born of Jewish parents were adopted by a religious Muslim couple. While 83% of students from other schools thought that the child would grow up to be a Muslim, only 48% of students at al-Islam shared that belief.<sup>12</sup> This essentialist belief that a child born of another religion could never fully become a Muslim was strongly related to support for violence. Students with this belief were about 10 times more likely than other students to believe that it was their duty to kill non-Muslims.<sup>13</sup> Note that the difference between al-Islam and the other schools cannot be attributed to different levels of religiosity, or even different levels of agreement with political Islam. Fewer students at al-Islam (71% compared to 82% of students at the other schools) believed it was “very important...that a

good government implement the laws of Shari'a” (not a significant difference statistically,  $P > 0.4$ ).

Another finding is that radical *madrasas* in Southeast Asia are important not only as tools of indoctrination, but also as “focal points” to draw like-minded radicals together, a point often missed by

**“Association with a JI-linked radical madrasa is a strong predictor of a jihadist's role in terrorist operations in Southeast Asia.”**

terrorism analysts. Association with a JI-linked radical *madrasa* is a strong predictor of a jihadist's role in terrorist operations in Southeast Asia. For example, both the spiritual guide of the Bali operation, Mukhlas, and the field commander, Imam Samudra, attended or associated with JI-linked radical *madrasas*, and built their financial, logistical and operational network around *madrasa* ties. The same is true for Dulmatin and Azhari Husin, the main bomb-makers in the operation. The study found that association with Lukman al-Hakim, a radical JI *madrasa* in Malaysia, increases the probability that a jihadist will play a major role by more than 23%. Based on this analysis, it can be surmised that JI-linked radical *madrasas* are both production sites and service centers for jihadists.

The following page shows a social network diagram of the 2002 Bali bombing that illustrates the connections between the different jihadists that took part in the bombing. Note that 16 of the 27 jihadists either attended or were associated with the radical *madrasas* Lukman al-Hakim or al-Mukmin,<sup>14</sup> including most of the leadership, planners and operators.

Indonesia,” *Boston Globe*, October 17, 2002.

7 Cited in Scott Atran, “The Emir: An Interview with Abu Bakr Ba'asyir, Alleged Leader of the Southeast Asian Jemaah Islamiyah Organization,” *Spotlight on Terrorism* 3:9 (2005).

8 Median age at NU schools was 16, and 18 at the other schools. Females comprised nearly half of the student body at the NU schools, five percent at al-Islam and none at the MMI school. Questionnaires were distributed only to males. Interestingly, at al-Islam 71% of respondents said they joined the school through pre-existing social networks of friends, whereas 70% of respondents at the other schools were sent there by their family.

9 Chi-square = 43.01,  $P < 0.0001$ .

10 Chi-square = 38.39,  $P < 0.0001$ .

11 Wald = 13.042, 95% CI for OR = 2.98-39.73,  $P = 0.0003$ .

12 Chi-square = 36.166,  $P < 0.0001$ .

13 Wald = 9.139, 95% CI for OR = 2.3 - 49.7,  $P = 0.003$ .

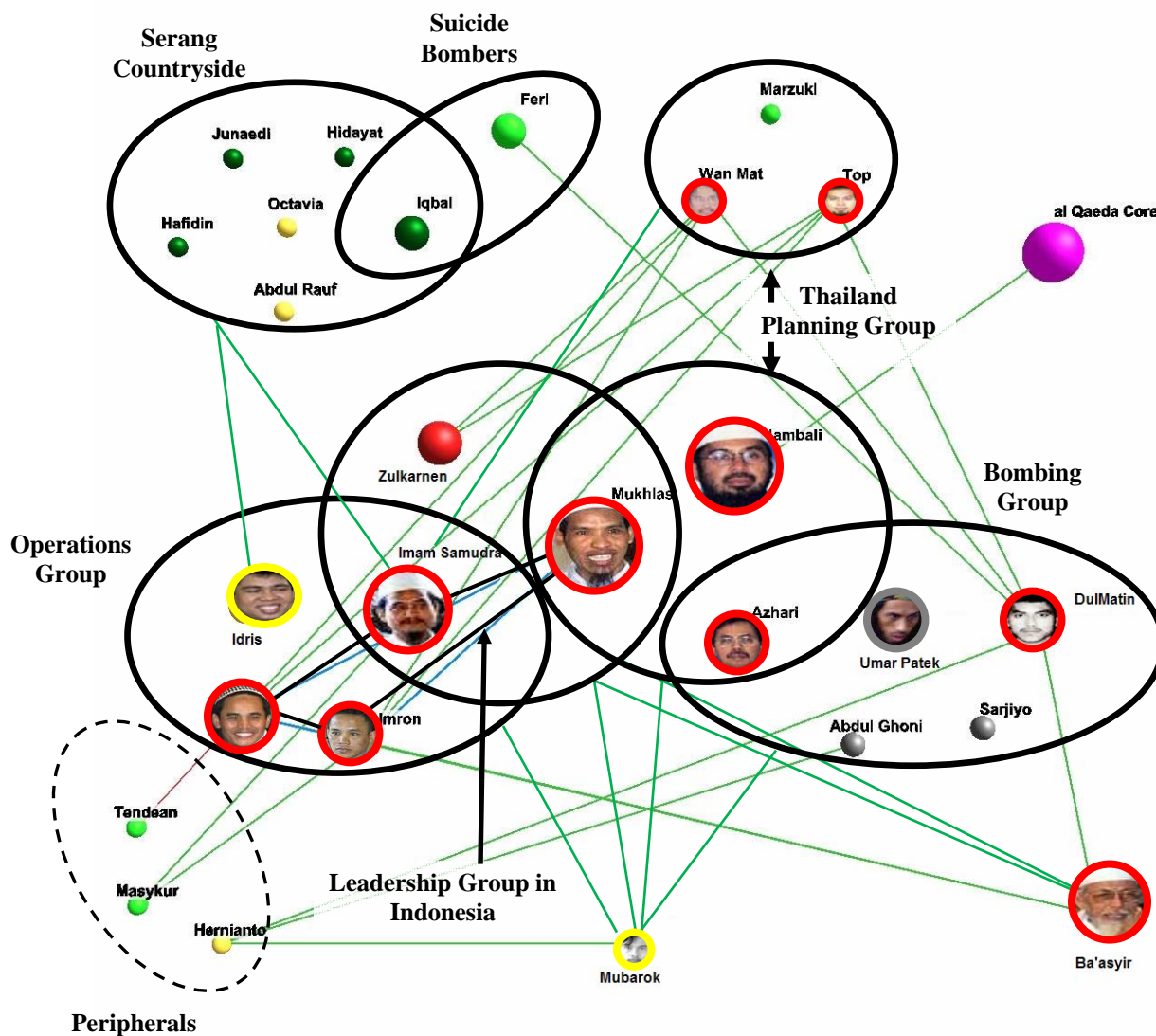
4 Justin Magouirk, “Connecting a Thousand Points of Hatred,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:4 (2008).

5 MMI is led by Abu Bakr Ba'asyir and has a membership that overlaps with but is broader than JI.

6 Cited in Indira Lakshmanan, “Islamic Leader Warns

14 Node size is based on the reputation of the individual. Reputation is derived from a mathematical algorithm that addresses both organizational role and attack history.

# Bali Network 2002



After the Bali I operation, most of the individuals who helped hide Ali Imron, one of the bombers, were students at or were associated with al-Islam, where he was a teacher. For instance, Hamzah Baya (class of 1999), Eko Hadi Prasetyo (1998), Sukastopo (met Imron at al-Islam), Sofyan Hadi (1998), Imam Susanto (2001), Sirojul Munir (parent of al-Islam student), Ilham bin Abdul Muthalib (2001), Muhammad Rusi bin Salim (1998), Azhari Dipo Kusuma (teacher at al-Islam at the same time as Ali Imron), Sumaro (1997) and Abdullah Salam (1999) were all arrested (and released in 2006) for hiding or helping Imron flee after the bombing.<sup>15</sup> Two others were tried in district court on charges of aiding Ali Imron, one of which was a relative of Ali Imron and the other a parent of a former student at al-Islam. The 2002 Bali operation is not unique.

#### Implications for an Anti-Terrorism Policy

From this data, a number of implications for an effective anti-terrorism policy can be drawn. First, allied governments should hone their focus on a small subset of radical *madrasas*. There is no evidence that *madrasas* in general spawn, or are even correlated with, terrorism; nevertheless, our research shows that, at least for Indonesia and Malaysia, there is strong statistical evidence that radical *madrasas* are correlated with terrorism and support for violence against those who hold different beliefs. These radical *madrasas* preach a jihadist version of *takfiri* ideology. *Takfiris* view contemporary society as antithetical to Islamic values and consider the killing of fellow Muslims to be justified in their cause to purify the community of alien influences. *Takfiri* jihadists reject standard Salafist teaching, which proscribes the killing of fellow Muslims and the overthrow of states ruled by Muslims because this would produce division and discord (*fitna*) in the community. In fact, the strict Salafist schools are generally the most virulent opponents of jihadism in Indonesia and elsewhere. Within JI there has been a debate over whether attacks are legitimate on Indonesian soil and, if so, whether

the killing of Muslims is allowed.<sup>16</sup> It is clear from the data that the role of radical *madrasas* concerns only the *takfiri* wing of JI, which allows both attacks on Indonesian soil and the killing of Muslims as well as foreigners for the sake of jihad.

Radical *madrasas* have provided operatives for every major JI attack outside of the strictly local conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon and Poso.<sup>17</sup> Most of the Bali attackers and planners either attended or were associated with one of three JI-linked radical schools—al-Mukmin, al-Islam or Lukman al-Hakim—and similar radical *madrasa* representation in other JI attacks indicates

### **“Radical madrasas have provided operatives for every major JI attack outside of the strictly local conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon and Poso.”**

that the radical *madrasa* factor is not an isolated phenomenon or one restricted to “unimportant” regional conflicts.

Second, governments should focus both foreign aid and counter-terrorism funding on combating this small but important group of radical schools. There are numerous social entrepreneurship organizations, such as Ashoka, that act as venture capital firms and fund innovative education programs in places like South and Southeast Asia, where education is often a privilege for the affluent. The effectiveness of such programs should be considered, whose “soft power” to wean away potential and future candidates for terrorism reliably produces wider and longer lasting results than direct diplomatic pressure or “hard power” alternatives that often backfire or cause blowback. It may not be possible to dissuade the small group of hardcore jihadists that hold unyielding

beliefs on the sanctity of their missions<sup>18</sup>; however, the number of jihadists that hold such unyielding beliefs prior to their association with radical *madrasas* or other focal points is relatively small. Accounts of the key Bali bombers show that radicalization occurred through association and attendance at radical *madrasas* and through militant training in Afghanistan and the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> Disrupting the radical *madrasa* source through competition could eliminate key radicalization centers for young males.<sup>20</sup>

Efforts should also focus intelligence gathering on radical *madrasas* that repeatedly produce terrorists. By focusing on a select group of radical *madrasas*, anti-terrorism efforts may be able to disrupt networks that form the basis for future attacks. This includes neutralizing the hardcore group of jihadists such as Bali bombers Mukhlas and Imam Samudra, who are most often part of these networks. This is a realistic mission for two reasons. First, the number of radical *madrasas* that preach *takfiri* ideology is quite small—our estimate is that under five percent of Indonesians attend radical *madrasas*. Second, within the small pool of radical *madrasas*, it should be possible to focus specifically on those that have direct ties to JI, as these are the schools that have funneled recruits to terrorist operations from 2000-2005.<sup>21</sup> Sidney Jones, Southeast Asia project director for the International Crisis Group, counts 30 such schools in Indonesia (out of about 14,000, or 2/10 of a percent).<sup>22</sup>

15 Thanks to Sidney Jones for providing this information. The al-Islam supporters were clearly not terrorists in the sense that the bombers were. Most of them were members of KOMPAK, an Islamic charity linked to JI (as well as other militant Islamic groups), but not part of JI. In his new book, Ali Imron deeply regrets getting them into trouble. See *Ali Imron, Sang Pengebom* (Ali Imron, the Bomber) (Jakarta: Republika Press, November 2007).

16 International Crisis Group, “Indonesia Background: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don’t Mix,” September 13, 2004.

17 There were more attacks in Poso between 2003 and 2006 than in the rest of Indonesia combined. None of the perpetrators there went to JI schools.

18 Scott Atran, “Global Network Terrorism,” NSC briefing, White House, Washington, D.C., April 28, 2006.

19 See Sally Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords: On the Trail of Terrorism from Afghanistan to Australia* (Sydney: HarperCollins Australia, 2004).

20 The Bali examples support evidence that jihadists tend to radicalize each other when they are isolated away from family and mainstream society. See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

21 JI could start to recruit from non-JI affiliated *madrasas*, and if this occurs the counter-terrorism focus would have to change. Although Noordin Top, the current attack leader of JI, has successfully enlisted operatives from outside the JI cadre of jihadists, he has still shown a strong tendency to rely on JI-affiliated *madrasas*. Accordingly, this small group of *madrasas* still presents a good place to commence counter-terrorism efforts.

22 Personal interview, Sidney Jones, January 18, 2008.



By focusing government aid and intelligence gathering on a small group of radical *madrasas*, lives and interests could be saved, with little if any effect on the network of moderate *madrasas* that provide masses of people with needed education in parts of Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

*Scott Atran is a political violence consultant for RTI International. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University. Dr. Atran is currently research director in anthropology at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, France, visiting professor of psychology and public policy at the University of Michigan and presidential scholar in sociology at the John Jay College of the City University of New York. Published in leading scientific journals, such as Science magazine and Behavioral and Brain Sciences, his work has also been covered by news and print media around the world, including feature stories in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.*

*Jeremy Ginges is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Dr. Ginges received his doctorate from Tel Aviv University and has had appointments at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan. He has published widely on the psychology of terrorism and intergroup conflict.*

*Justin Magouirk spent two years as the Manager and then Executive Director for the Global Transnational Terrorism Project. He received his MA and Ph.D. in Political Science (focus on terrorism) from the University of Michigan. Dr. Magouirk currently works for a Seattle-based consulting firm.*

## The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology

By Assaf Moghadam

IN RECENT YEARS, a growing number of analysts and policymakers have referred to the doctrines guiding al-Qa`ida and its associates as an ideology, and they appear to have influenced the Bush administration into adopting the term as well. In an address at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. in September 2006, for example, President Bush characterized the 9/11 suicide hijackers as men who “kill in the name of a clear and focused ideology.”<sup>1</sup> In the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT) released in the same month, the authors described al-Qa`ida’s set of beliefs as “an ideology of oppression, violence, and hate,”<sup>2</sup> as well as “a form of totalitarianism following in the path of fascism and Nazism.”<sup>3</sup>

Although descriptions of the precepts and beliefs guiding al-Qa`ida and its associates as ideological in nature certainly hit the mark, few serious attempts have been made to justify the use of the term “ideology” in connection with the Salafi-jihad—the guiding doctrine of al-Qa`ida, its affiliates, associates and progeny.<sup>4</sup> This article will discuss the nature of ideologies and examine the extent to which the Salafi-jihad can be compared to other ideologies such as fascism or communism. It concludes that the Salafi-jihad is best described as a religious ideology rather than a secular ideology such as fascism or National Socialism. The final part will explain why a proper labeling of the Salafi-jihad has important policy implications.

1 “President Discusses Global War on Terror,” September 5, 2006, available at [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html).

2 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, September 2006, p. 5, available at [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf).

3 Ibid., p. 11.

4 For the purposes of this article, the terms Salafi-jihad, Salafi-jihadists and Salafi-jihadist refer to the core doctrines and beliefs of al-Qa`ida and its associated movements—i.e., its ideology. It does not refer to the larger social movement comprised of al-Qa`ida and its associates.

## The Functions of Ideologies

Ideologies have several core functions, of which the first is to raise awareness to a particular group of people that a certain issue deserves their attention. Ideologies explain to that “in-group” why social, political, or economic conditions are as they are. Since individuals often seek explanations in times of crisis, ideologies are particularly appealing when a group of people perceives itself to be in a predicament. The second function is a diagnostic one, whereby the ideology attributes blame for the present predicament of the in-group upon some “out-group.” The out-group is identified with a certain behavior that, according to the narrative offered by the ideology, undermines the well-being of the in-group. A third function of ideology lies in the creation of a group identity. At the same time that the out-group is blamed for the predicament of the in-group, the ideology identifies and highlights the common characteristics of those individuals who adhere to, or are potential adherents of, the ideology. The fourth and final function of ideologies is a programmatic one. It consists of the ideology offering a specific program of action said to remedy the in-group of its predicament and urges its adherents to implement that course of action.<sup>5</sup>

Ideologies are links between thoughts, beliefs and myths on the one hand, and action on the other hand. They can be instruments of preservation in as far as they can help a given group to preserve its political power. More commonly, however, ideologies are used as instruments of competition and conflict, whereby a group can utilize ideology as a means of opposition and contestation. Once a group internalizes the sets of beliefs associated with a given ideology, that ideology provides a “cognitive map” that filters the way social realities are perceived, rendering that reality easier to grasp, more coherent, and thus more meaningful. It is for that reason that ideologies offer some measure of security and relief in the face of ambiguity—particularly in times of crisis.

Ideology may help create significant divides between adherents and non-

5 A similar categorization of the functions of ideology is used in Terence Ball and Richard Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999).

adherents. According to Christopher Flood, individuals who are especially convinced by an ideology can exhibit “a remarkable ability to ignore, deny, or reinterpret information which is incompatible with tenets of their belief system.”<sup>6</sup> Ideologues themselves, meanwhile, “tend to be explicit in their cognitive claims, exclusionary in their membership, authoritarian in their leadership, rigorous in their ethical mandates, and insistent on the rightness of their causes.”<sup>7</sup>

To the in-group, ideology confers identification with a particular cause, and thus a sense of purpose. That shared sense of purpose can form a common identity among the members, while at the same time heighten opposition and feelings of separation from individuals who do not share these beliefs.

#### The Salafi-jihad: Religion or Ideology?

The Salafi-jihad is more akin to an ideology than to a religion because like other ideologies it is a by-product of the industrialization that swept through Europe beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is hence an outgrowth of modernity. It is intimately linked to the dislocating and turbulent effects of globalization, which introduced rapid changes in the social, political and economic realms of life. Those transformations have challenged established and rooted notions of identity associated with traditional social structures.

The Salafi-jihad is an ideology because its functions are essentially congruent with those of other ideologies. Analogous to the first, explanatory function of ideology, the Salafi-jihadists’ goal is to raise awareness among Muslims that their religion has been on the wane. Whereas Islam used to be at its peak during the first centuries of its existence, Salafi-jihadists urge Muslims to understand that the tide has turned, and that Islam is in a constant state of decline in religious, political, military, economic and cultural terms.

Secondly, and analogous with the diagnostic function of modern ideologies, the Salafi-jihad identifies the alleged

source of Islam’s conundrum in the persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what it terms “Crusaders,” “Zionists” and “apostates.”

The third function of the Salafi-jihad also parallels that of other ideologies, namely its attempt at creating a new identity for its adherents. Several scholars have argued that Muslims and Western converts adopting Salafi-jihadist tenets suffer from a crisis of identity.<sup>8</sup> To those who are disoriented by modernity, the Salafi-jihad provides a new sense of self-definition

**“To those who are disoriented by modernity, the Salafi-jihad provides a new sense of self-definition and belonging in the form of a membership to a supranational entity.”**

and belonging in the form of membership to a supranational entity. Salafi-jihadists attempt to instill into Muslims the notion that the only identity that truly matters is that of membership in the umma, the global Islamic community that bestows comfort, dignity, security and honor upon the downtrodden Muslims.

Finally, like all ideologies, Salafi-jihadists present a program of action, namely jihad, which is understood in military terms. They assert that jihad will reverse the tide of history and redeem adherents and potential adherents of Salafi-jihadist ideology from their misery. Martyrdom is extolled as the ultimate way in which jihad can be waged—hence the proliferation of suicide attacks among Salafi-jihadist groups.<sup>9</sup>

Similar to other ideologies, the Salafi-jihad sharply distinguishes between

its adherents and those who reject its doctrines. Westerners are commonly described as infidels, while moderate Muslims and Arabs are labeled apostates. To the most extreme Salafi-jihadists, Muslims who reject the tenets of Salafi-jihad are tantamount to infidels, thus deserving of death.

Like leaders of other ideologies, Usama bin Ladin and leading figures of Salafi-jihadist groups ignore, deny, or reinterpret information that counters or could potentially weaken their argument. For instance, Salafi-jihadists ignored Western support to Muslim Indonesia in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. They interpret their violence on other Muslims as religiously sanctioned, ignoring sections of Muslim holy texts that prohibit internecine fighting or the killing of civilians. They single-handedly blame the West for each and every misfortune that has befallen Muslims.

As an ideology, the Salafi-jihad has much in common with radical leftist ideologies of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Like the radical left, the Salafi-jihad describes its action in part as a revolt against injustice, and it rejects bourgeois values, imperialism and materialism. The goal of both the leftist movements and Salafi-jihadists is essentially an elusive quest to help bring about a more just society—violence is seen as a justified means to an end. Both Salafi-jihadists and radical leftist revolutionaries believe that the scope of their activities and the importance of their actions are global in nature, as are their goals. As Stephen Holmes observed, for Salafi-jihadists the caliphate “is the religious equivalent of Marx’s Communist utopia.”<sup>10</sup>

If the Salafi-jihad is thus an ideology, what is its relationship with religion—and how do ideologies differ from religions? Religions differ from ideologies in two important respects, namely their target audience and their relationship toward the existing order. In terms of their target audience, the primary focus of ideologies is the group, whereas that of religions is the individual. As Bruce Lawrence has pointed out, “religion focuses on maximizing individual benefit through

6 Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 20.

7 Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 77.

8 Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

9 Indeed, Salafi-jihadist groups are the dominant perpetrators of suicide attacks today. See Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming in 2008).

10 Stephen Holmes, “Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001,” in Diego Gambetta ed., *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 170.

group participation, while ideology is intent on maximizing group benefit through individual participation.”<sup>11</sup> Precisely because of its preoccupation with the group as a whole, ideology demands great loyalty and commitment on the part of the individual member. Ideologies, like religions, demand verbal assent from their members, but more than religions ideologies also demand complete control over the thoughts, words and deeds of their adherents.<sup>12</sup> This characteristic also applies to al-Qa`ida and like-minded groups, who have prominently adopted an approach of “you are either with us or against us.”

Second, religions tend to support existing orders, while ideologies tend to confront them. “Ideologies are not merely world-reflecting but world-constituting,” wrote Lawrence. “They tend to have a ‘missionary’ zeal to show others what they need to do, to correct and help them to that end.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, unlike religious leaders, Bin Ladin goes beyond merely disagreeing with those who do not share his beliefs—he battles them.

Yet, while the Salafi-jihad is distinct from Islam due to the former’s ideological nature, it also differs from ordinary ideologies in an important respect—it tends to use religious words, symbols and values to sustain itself and grow. Ideologies are usually devoid of religious symbols. Ian Adams, for instance, wrote that “what separates [religion from ideology] is that while the central feature of a religious understanding is its concept of the divine, the central feature of an ideological understanding is its conception of human nature.”<sup>14</sup>

Unlike secular ideologies, however, the Salafi-jihad is a religious ideology because it invokes religion in three ways. First, it describes itself and its enemies in religious terms. Salafi-jihadists label themselves using such religious names as the “Army of Muhammad,” the “Lions of Islam,” and of course “jihadist.” At the same time, they describe their enemies in religious terms as well, referring to them as Crusaders, apostates, or infidels. Secondly, Salafi-

jihadists describe their strategy and mission as a religious one. Their struggle is a jihad, which they themselves define in military terms, as opposed to the “internal war” against human temptations. Their main tactic, they claim, is not suicide attacks, but “martyrdom operations”—a term whose origin is ironically associated with Shi`a Islam, which itself is deemed apostate by Salafi-jihadists. Finally, they justify acts of violence with references drawn selectively from the Qur’an. Most Muslims, including non-violent Salafists, cite a number of sources from the Qur’an and hadith against the killing of civilians. Salafi-jihadists, on the other hand, cite a

**“It is a fact that al-Qa`ida and associated groups offer no vision for Muslims other than perennial jihad—hardly an appealing prospect.”**

number of Qur’anic verses and Hanbali rulings in support of their claim, such as Sura 16:126: “And if you take your turn, then punish with the like of that with which you were afflicted.”

#### Policy Implications

Accurately labeling the nature of Salafi-jihadist doctrine as a religious ideology is not merely an exercise in academic theorizing, but has important policy implications. Most importantly, it should be obvious that the United States and its allies are not facing a religion—Islam—as their main enemy, but an ideology, namely the Salafi-jihad. The fact that the Salafi-jihad is no ordinary secular ideology, but a religious one, however, is of additional significance because it renders the attempt to challenge that ideology far more complex. Salafi-jihadists employ religious rhetoric and symbols to advance their cause. Although they selectively pick from the Islamic tradition only those elements that advance their narrow agenda, they nevertheless draw from the same religious sources that inform the lives and practices of more than a billion other Muslims. It is for that reason that ordinary Muslims—not to speak of non-Muslims—find it particularly difficult and dangerous to challenge Salafi-jihadists without running the risk of being accused

of targeting Islam as a whole.

If the vast majority of non-Muslims find it difficult to strike the right chord between attacking Salafi-jihadists without being perceived as attacking Islam, the hurdles for the United States and its allies seem almost insurmountable. Therefore, a counter-terrorism approach that highlights the corruption of Salafi-jihadist ideology not on religious, but on secular grounds, is more likely to have the desired effect of weakening that ideology’s appeal. Rather than highlighting the doctrinal and theological inconsistencies among Salafi-jihadists, the United States and its allies should grasp every opportunity to highlight the disastrous consequences that Salafi-jihadist violence has wrought on the everyday lives not only of Westerners, but first and foremost on Muslims themselves. It is a simple, though not sufficiently emphasized fact that the primary victims of Salafi-jihadists are Muslims, who are killed and maimed in far greater numbers than non-Muslims. Salafi-jihadists openly justify the killing of civilians, including Muslims, under a logic of the ends justifying the means. It is equally a fact that leaders of Salafi-jihadist organizations hypocritically preach about the benefits of martyrdom, but rarely, if ever, conduct suicidal operations themselves, or send their loved ones on such missions. It is a fact that al-Qa`ida and associated groups offer no vision for Muslims other than perennial jihad—hardly an appealing prospect.

Waging a battle against a religious ideology such as the Salafi-jihad is a challenging task that requires commitment and ingenuity. Yet, highlighting a few simple, yet damaging facts about the actual results of Salafi-jihadists can go a long way.

*Assaf Moghadam, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, where he directs the CTC’s new Shi`a Ideology Project. He is also a postdoctoral fellow at the International Security Program/Initiative on Religion in International Affairs at Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Dr. Moghadam is the author of The Roots of Terrorism (New York: Chelsea House, 2006). His second book, The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks, is forthcoming with Johns Hopkins University Press in October 2008.*

11 Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, p. 79.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ian Adams, *The Logic of Political Belief: A Philosophical Analysis of Ideology* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 86-87.



## Somalia's al-Shabab Reconstitutes Fighting Force

By Anonymous

IN JANUARY 2008, the African Union (AU) issued a warning that the Somali radical militant group al-Shabab had expanded its activities to areas outside of Mogadishu and were training new recruits and planning attacks. AU Commission Chairman Alpha Konare said al-Shabab's strategy appeared to be that of

further weakening the TFG [Transitional Federal Government] by destabilizing as many areas as possible, fully aware that the government does not, at the moment, have the capacity to deploy significant numbers of troops in all regions.<sup>1</sup>

Konare's statement is significant for two reasons. For one, it was the first public admission by the AU that it believes al-Shabab, which suffered heavy losses in battles against Ethiopian troops in December 2006, has been fully reconstituted as a fighting force and is gaining strength in areas that it previously had little or no influence. Second, it revealed the AU's growing concern about al-Shabab's potential to deal a death blow to the UN-backed TFG, which is on the verge of collapse following a bitter power struggle in October between its president, Abdullahi Yusuf, and its former prime minister, Ali Mohamed Gedi.

### The Origins of al-Shabab

An on-the-ground investigation strongly suggests that the radical al-Shabab organization, which is claiming responsibility for the Iraq-style violence in Somalia, may have emerged in 2004 partly as a reaction to a failed CIA attempt to capture one of the three Somalia-based al-Qa`ida operatives wanted in connection with the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan and Tariq Abdullah (also known as Taha al-Sudani) were believed to be hiding in Somalia under the protection of al-Shabab founder Aden Hashi Ayro

and his long-time mentor, Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys.<sup>2</sup> In July 2004, the CIA received a tip that bomb-maker Abu Taha al-Sudani was holed up in a compound in Mogadishu that belonged to Ayro. A raid on the compound was subsequently carried out by militiamen loyal to factional leader Mohamed Qanare. Neither al-Sudani nor Ayro were inside, but Ayro's brother-in-law was killed during a brief firefight.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after that raid, Ayro began a covert recruitment drive in Mogadishu to establish an army "to protect Islam and save the Somali nation from infidels." Clan elders did not initially react with alarm, apparently because many viewed the effort as little more than an attempt by Ayro, who did not command a militia, to build a team of personal bodyguards.<sup>4</sup>

Ayro shrewdly targeted the most plentiful and the most vulnerable segment of the population—poor, disillusioned and disaffected young men, looking desperately for work, a sense of belonging and self-worth. Ayro brought them on board with a message that skillfully blended Somalia's powerful nationalist sentiment and its traditional reverence for Islam: "Gain self-respect and dignity by defending your religion and people from non-believers and imperialists, who are trying to destroy us," he stated.<sup>5</sup> By the time Ethiopia launched its invasion of Somalia in December 2006 to oust Somali Islamists from power, as many as 5,000 young men were thought to have been

recruited into al-Shabab in Mogadishu alone.

By late 2005, al-Shabab had turned into a highly disciplined fighting force, whose professionalism and dedication surprised even Ayro.<sup>6</sup> The vast majority of the recruits were foot soldiers, who were by and large nationalists, not religious fanatics.<sup>7</sup> Their allegiance was not specifically to Ayro but to the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an amalgamation of different clan-based religious courts which, for several years, had been gaining credibility and popularity among Mogadishu's war-weary residents for their work in setting up hospitals and schools, as well as resolving legal disputes and maintaining a tough stance on law and order.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, several hundred elite al-Shabab fighters, handpicked by Ayro mostly from his Ayr sub-clan, were of a different breed; they were fiercely loyal to their leader and thoroughly committed to the goal of creating a new Islamic caliphate in greater Somalia.<sup>9</sup> According to an interview with an al-Shabab fighter, most, if not all, of these fighters were flown to Eritrea and given advance training in explosives and guerrilla war fighting tactics, including how to make roadside bombs, car bombs and suicide vests using explosive material cannibalized from various weapon systems.<sup>10</sup> Another

6 Personal interview, Somali journalist source, Mogadishu, January 3, 2007.

7 Personal conversations with three unidentified al-Shabab foot soldiers in Mogadishu, January 4, 2007. All three emphasized that they were drawn to al-Shabab primarily because they saw it as a group dedicated to fighting Ethiopia, a traditional enemy which they believe is "bent on destroying our religion and turning Somalia into a vassal state to plunder her resources and control her ports." They said they were also impressed with Ayro, whom they describe as a "kind, charismatic, and caring" father figure.

8 Personal interview, security source, Mogadishu, January 3, 2007.

9 Ibid.

10 Personal interview, 18-year-old al-Shabab fighter "Abdi," Mogadishu, January 5, 2007. According to Abdi, he and about 300 others who performed well in a basic training course held in Mogadishu in July 2006 were flown to Eritrea in late September to receive two months of additional training from Eritrean and Somali instructors at an undisclosed camp outside of Asmara. Abdi noted that before any recruit received advanced training, a thorough background check was conducted to ensure he was not a spy.

1 "Somalia: Anti-Government Activities Spreading, Warns AU," IRIN, January 21, 2008.

2 Aden Hashi Ayro was the former military chief of the Hawiye-dominated Islamic Courts Union, a position to which he rose through his clan ties (Ayr sub-clan of the Habr Gedir) and close association with the ICU's religious head, Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys. Aweys, an Islamic fundamentalist who led the radical Somali militia al-Ittihad al-Islami in Puntland in the early 1990s, is believed to have met Usama bin Ladin in Sudan in the mid-1990s and arranged to have Ayro trained by al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan sometime between 1997 and 2000.

3 Personal interview, Matt Bryden, former International Crisis Group analyst, Nairobi, December 5, 2006. Al-Sudani was unwittingly killed on or about January 23, 2007 near the Somali-Kenyan border in an Ethiopian air attack on fleeing Islamists. Americans and Ethiopians did not realize al-Sudani was dead for several months.

4 Personal interview, Ayr clan leader, Mogadishu, January 4, 2007.

5 Personal interview, 27-year-old al-Shabab foot soldier "Hassan," Mogadishu, January 5, 2007.

al-Shabab fighter, known as "Hassan," explained how he had been trained at one of the half dozen secret training camps set up by Ayro around Mogadishu.<sup>11</sup> At the camps, new recruits were divided into small groups. Each group had to complete a six-week fitness program, designed to strengthen endurance and improve running, crawling and jumping skills. The final lesson was learning how to shoot accurately on the run. Hassan said that those who performed well overall were sent to the front lines to battle Ethiopian troops. He also confirmed reports that Ayro had incorporated foreign fighters among the ranks of al-Shabab; about 25 Arabs fought alongside Hassan outside the town of Bur Hakaba, near Baidoa.<sup>12</sup>

Between June and November 2006, UN arms monitors compiled a report that accused Eritrea of being one of 10 countries in Africa and the Middle East that had provided fighters, weapons, training and logistics support to Somalia's Islamist movement.<sup>13</sup> The report did not mention al-Qa`ida by name, but it is widely assumed that in addition to Eritrea, semi-autonomous al-Qa`ida cells in various countries had actively assisted Ayro in turning al-Shabab into the most feared organization in Somalia.<sup>14</sup>

11 Personal interview, 27-year-old al-Shabab foot soldier "Hassan," Mogadishu, January 5, 2007. Hassan went through al-Shabab boot camp two months before Ethiopia began its military invasion of Somalia in December 2006. He said that he was trained at Fish Trafico, one of half a dozen secret training camps Ayro had set up around Mogadishu. An al-Qa`ida training camp in Ras Kamboni may have also been used to train recruits, but Hassan said he did not meet anyone who had been sent there.

12 Ibid. Hassan did not know from which countries the Arabs had come, but he said all of them spoke reasonable amounts of Somali.

13 Leaked UN arms report to the Security Council, November 15, 2006. The report accused 10 countries, including Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the Lebanese militia Hizb Allah of funneling arms and other aid to militants in the ICU. Some of the report's allegations have been largely discredited, in particular the finding that 720 Somali mercenaries fought alongside Hizb Allah in its July 2006 battle with Israeli forces in southern Lebanon and that Iran shipped arms to Somalia's Islamic militants in return for access to uranium mines.

14 Personal interviews, Somali journalist sources, Mogadishu, January 9, 2007. On January 5, 2007, an audio recording, allegedly by al-Qa`ida's number two leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, was released, urging Somalis to use guerrilla tactics, including suicide attacks and

In June 2006, al-Shabab fighters led the ICU to victory in Mogadishu over a U.S.-backed alliance of self-styled anti-terrorist warlords. Once in power, Ayro seized the position of military chief of the ICU. Ayro, his mentor Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, and other hardliners are said to have used al-Shabab to intimidate, threaten and sideline scores of moderate ICU leaders, the latter of whom criticized

### **"Some Somalis say the Youth Mujahidin Movement (YMM) is an offshoot of al-Shabab."**

efforts to strengthen ICU ties with Eritrea and al-Qa`ida and were fearful of the increasing presence of foreign fighters in Mogadishu and elsewhere in central and southern Somalia.<sup>15</sup>

#### **The Return of al-Shabab and its Connection with the Youth Mujahidin Movement**

After the Ethiopian military intervention ended the ICU's six month rule, the government of Yusuf and Gedi, installed in its place, had a window of opportunity to turn public distrust of the TFG into grassroots support by including moderate Islamists in the ICU in a broad-based governing structure. Western powers, including the United States, had hoped that the arrangement could isolate the radical elements of the ICU, curb their ability to find new recruits and bring enough stability for a speedy withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia.

From the start, however, Yusuf and Gedi entrenched themselves in corrupt Somali clan politics, determined to carry out their own personal agendas. Instead of working on building consensus and trying to forge an alliance with moderate ICU exiles in Eritrea, Yusuf and Gedi concentrated their efforts on fighting each other for political dominance, for

roadside bombings, against Ethiopian troops in Somalia. The journalist sources with clan ties to radical militia fighters said that they feared as many as 3,500 mostly disbanded al-Shabab members in Mogadishu stood ready to re-group and heed al-Qa`ida's call because the terrorist group "had already given a lot of al-Shabab fighters good training to carry out such attacks."

15 Personal interviews, Hawiye clan elders, Mogadishu, January 10, 2007.

control of Somalia's infrastructure and natural resources, and used the threat of terrorism as an excuse to brutally crack down on dissent and punish opponents.<sup>16</sup> The consensus among Western Somali observers is that the TFG's rapid descent into factional politics, and Ethiopia's apparent disinterest in doing anything other than propping up the TFG militarily, has provided an ideal environment for al-Shabab to re-organize, recruit and expand the group's reach.<sup>17</sup>

To that extent, it appears that the command structure of al-Shabab may have been decentralized and the group broken down into cells to give regional al-Shabab commanders greater independence to carry out attacks when and where they see fit. For example, Ayro's former deputy in the ICU, Muktar Robow (also known as Abu Mansour), is said to be leading a cell in his home region of Bay, targeting Ethiopian and government troops protecting the Somali parliament in the town of Baidoa.<sup>18</sup> Another high-ranking militant in the ICU, Hassan Turki, is believed to be leading an al-Shabab cell in his stronghold in the Lower Juba region. He is thought to be responsible for January's remotely-detonated roadside bombing, which killed several foreign aid workers and Somalis in the town of Kismayo.<sup>19</sup>

A decentralized command structure could also explain why it is not yet clear who is in overall charge of the group. Ayro was wounded during a U.S. airstrike near the Islamist stronghold of Ras Kamboni on January 7, 2007 and disappeared for

16 Personal interviews, Hawiye clan elders, Somali journalists, civil society leaders, businessmen and Western aid workers, Mogadishu, April-June 2007.

17 Views of the Western Somali observers are best reflected in an article by Michael Weinstein, "Somalia's New Reality: A Strategic Overview," Power and Interest News Report (PINR), December 27, 2007.

18 "Local Officials Flee Town Near Baidoa, Cite Islamist Gunmen," Garowe Online, January 7, 2008. The report said that in late November 2007 the governor of Bakool region said al-Shabab fighters were organizing in Bakool and Bay regions, with unconfirmed reports that the fighters belonged to Muktar Robow. In an interview with Reuters on December 16, 2007, Muktar Robow acknowledged that he was based in the southern Bay province.

19 "INGO vehicle struck by RCIED in Lower Juba, Kismayo Town," NGO SPAS Security Advisory 004/08, January 28, 2008.

several months.<sup>20</sup> In March 2007, al-Qa`ida named Ayro as its top leader in Somalia, leaving open the possibility that he was still engaged in al-Shabab activities and communicating with his commanders in Mogadishu from a hideout in Ras Kamboni.<sup>21</sup> Ayro did resurface in the capital in August 2007, but he apparently did not stay long, rejected by clan elders who asked him to leave the city because

**“For now, al-Shabab appears to be singularly focused on the tasks of throwing out the Ethiopians and re-establishing Islamic rule in Somalia as quickly as possible.”**

they feared he would “bring more trouble to everybody.”<sup>22</sup> Ayro is now said to be constantly on the move, never staying in one town or in one area for more than a few days.<sup>23</sup> Last month, a report appeared on a Somali website announcing the election of Shaykh Muktar Abdirahman (also known as Abu Zubeyr) as the new *amir* of al-Shabab in Mogadishu.<sup>24</sup> Little is known about Abu Zubeyr other than he, like Ayro, received training in Afghanistan under the Taliban and is virulently anti-Western.

It is unclear what connection Ayro, Muktar Robow, Hassan Turki or Abu Zubeyr may have, if any, to a radical Somali group that emerged in Mogadishu last February. Some Somalis say the Youth Mujahidin Movement (YMM) is an offshoot of al-Shabab. Others say it is al-Shabab trying to re-define itself as a popular movement. Whatever the truth, YMM alarmed the Western world, posting battle reports

on the internet, a common al-Qa`ida propaganda tactic not previously seen in Somalia.<sup>25</sup> In March, 2007, YMM produced their first-ever martyr video, showing a man reciting prayers from the Qur`an before apparently blowing himself up in a suicide attack on an Ethiopian base in north Mogadishu. Since then, al-Shabab/YMM has claimed responsibility for missile attacks on planes and suicide and IED attacks on Ethiopian and TFG forces in Mogadishu and elsewhere, suggesting that al-Qa`ida-linked groups in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Middle East may be continuing to provide arms, training and personnel.<sup>26</sup> Reliable sources in the capital and in Baidoa, however, say that they have not seen foreign fighters in their towns and the attacks are being planned and carried out by Somalis.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Al-Shabab Looks Inward for Now**

For now, al-Shabab appears to be singularly focused on the tasks of throwing out the Ethiopians and re-establishing Islamic rule in Somalia as quickly as possible. The familiar hard line rhetoric of establishing a greater Somalia under the banner of radical Islam has been replaced for the time being with calls for self-sacrifice in the name of patriotism. In Mogadishu mosques, al-Shabab's senior leaders such as Shaykh Fu`ad Shongole urge all Somalis to join the insurgency, praying for Allah to return “Somali dignity, prosperity, and respect taken by traitors, evil Christian crusaders and occupiers.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> YMM battle reports have appeared on a regular basis since early March 2007 on the Somali-language internet website [www.dalkanews.com](http://www.dalkanews.com).

<sup>26</sup> Chris Tomlinson, “Islamic Militants Rebound in Somalia,” Associated Press, April 27, 2007. In the report, Tomlinson said that al-Shabab had provided al-Jazeera television with the video of the March bombing. Another video obtained by AP in June 2007 showed a Somali man pointing a shoulder-held missile launcher at the sky and then firing. The video suggests that al-Shabab fighters had brought down a Russian-built Ilyushin-76 that crashed in flames shortly after delivering equipment for Ugandan peacekeepers in Mogadishu on March 23, 2007. All 11 aboard were killed. Witnesses and airport staff reported the plane was brought down by a missile, but government officials said at the time that the pilot had called the control tower to say the plane had engine problems.

<sup>27</sup> Personal telephone interviews, Mogadishu-based journalist sources and human rights activists, October 24, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Personal interview, security source, Mogadishu, December 2, 2008.

In an interview with Reuters on December 16, 2007, Muktar Robow said that al-Shabab was now “financially and morally supported by the population.”<sup>29</sup> That claim is somewhat backed up in interviews with Mogadishu residents and business leaders, who describe government officials, soldiers and Ethiopian troops as “looters, robbers, and rapists.” A majority admit to giving food, money and shelter to al-Shabab insurgents, generally viewing them as “freedom fighters.”<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, al-Shabab can hardly be regarded as a champion of freedom, conducting activities that appear to be alienating the public in much the same way that the ICU began losing popular support after hardliners in the ICU began enforcing strict Shari`a laws in areas they controlled. Mogadishu residents say they live in fear of al-Shabab informants, who roam the streets in jeans and t-shirts and listen in on private conversations. Anyone overheard criticizing al-Shabab or its tactics is labeled an infidel or a government collaborator and is usually sentenced to death. In Islamist strongholds in the capital, movie theaters have been ordered to shut down. Owners who have disobeyed the order have been executed.<sup>31</sup>

By adopting many of the same tactics used by al-Qa`ida and the Taliban, al-Shabab's leadership in the past year has demonstrated their readiness, if not willingness, to be incorporated into a larger effort to expand terrorist networks in the Horn of Africa. Worryingly, many ordinary Somalis appear to have given up on the TFG and are angry with the West for supporting Ethiopia's military occupation. Somali militants are taking advantage of that anger to woo and radicalize the population. Indeed, leaving Somalia to fester in its current state virtually guarantees the creation of an al-Qa`ida haven in the Horn, sooner rather than later.

*This report was authored by anonymous.*

<sup>20</sup> Alex Perry, “Somalia on the Edge,” *Time*, November 27, 2007. Ayro's personal effects were found at the site of the AC-130 attack on his convoy.

<sup>21</sup> “Al-Qaeda Names Ayro its Leader in Mogadishu,” Reuters, March 22, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Personal interview, Ayr clan elder, Mogadishu, September 4, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Abu Zubeyr's announcement appeared on the Somali-language website [Dalkanews.com](http://Dalkanews.com) on December 21, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> “Somali Insurgency to Intensify—Islamist Leader,” Reuters, December 16, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Randomly-selected personal interviews with 15 residents in the Hodan district and Suqa Huluwa (recently renamed Little Falluja) area of Mogadishu and five business community leaders in Bakara Market, December 6, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Personal interview, journalist source, Mogadishu, December 6, 2007.



## Deconstructing the Myth about al-Qa`ida and Khobar

By Thomas Hegghammer

AT 10 PM ON JUNE 25, 1996, a gigantic explosion struck the Khobar Towers housing compound for the U.S. Air Force in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup> A tanker truck filled with several tons of TNT detonated on a nearby parking lot, killing 19 U.S. soldiers and injuring more than 200 people.<sup>2</sup> The attack, the largest on a U.S. target since the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon, prompted three official inquiries in the United States, as well as the relocation of most U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia from the Eastern Province to Prince Sultan Airbase outside Riyadh.

Despite its scale and repercussions, the Khobar bombing continues to be the subject of considerable speculation, not least concerning the identities of the perpetrators. In 2001, a U.S. court formally indicted a group of Saudi Shi'a allegedly linked to a militant group called Saudi Hizb Allah.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, William Perry, secretary of defense at the time of the bombing, stated that he believed al-Qa`ida was responsible.<sup>4</sup> The then FBI director, Louis Freeh, claimed on the other hand that Iran had ordered the

attack.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps reflecting its bipartisan mandate, the *9/11 Report* assigned blame to all of the above, by stating that

the operation was carried out principally, perhaps exclusively, by Saudi Hezbollah, an organization that had received support from the government of Iran. While the evidence of Iranian involvement is strong, there are also signs that al-Qa`ida played some role, as yet unknown.<sup>6</sup>

The issue of Iranian involvement is shrouded in so much secrecy and high level politics that any assessment based on open sources remains impossible. The question of al-Qa`ida's involvement, on the other hand, can now be addressed because vast amounts of new information about both al-Qa`ida and Saudi jihadism in the 1990s have emerged in the past few years. This article will examine the hypothesis that al-Qa`ida alone was behind Khobar as well as the theory that Usama bin Ladin collaborated with Tehran.

### Assessing al-Qa`ida's Role

The principal reason to suspect al-Qa`ida's involvement is the fact that Usama bin Ladin had a motive to attack. Since late 1990, Bin Ladin had expressed deep dissatisfaction with the U.S. military presence in his native Saudi Arabia, a presence he considered a violation of the sanctity of the "Land of the Two Holy Places." In August 1996, he declared war on U.S. troops in the Arabian Peninsula. Although this declaration postdates the Khobar bombing, Bin Ladin had declared his readiness to attack U.S. troops several years earlier in informal settings.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Bin Ladin applauded the Khobar operation in a number of statements and interviews after the attack.<sup>8</sup>

5 Louis Freeh, "Khobar Towers," *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2006.

6 *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004), p. 60.

7 In a speech recorded in Saudi Arabia around 1991 and posted on the internet in 2006, Bin Ladin can be heard advocating resistance to the U.S. presence. See Muzaf-fir al-Ansari, "Bin ladin shaban...an'am wa akram," Muntada al-Hisba, May 14, 2006. According to Jamal al-Fadl, Bin Ladin, Abu Hajir al-Iraqi and Saad al-Sharif declared in internal al-Qa`ida meetings around 1993 that it was necessary and legitimate to use force against U.S. troops in the Gulf and in Somalia. See *U.S.A. v. UBL*, Southern District of New York, 2001, p. 266ff.

8 In early July 1996, Bin Ladin told the journalist Robert Fisk that "what happened in Riyadh and Khobar when

Many would also argue that Bin Ladin also had the operational capability. Al-Qa`ida-linked militants undertook several military operations overseas in the early 1990s, from an alleged assassination attempt on the former king of Afghanistan in Rome in November 1991, to the hotel bombings in the Yemeni port of Aden in December 1992, to guerrilla warfare in Somalia in 1993. There is also evidence that Bin Ladin sought to operate in Saudi Arabia from approximately 1994 onward. In mid-1994, Saudi authorities allegedly intercepted a shipment of explosives sent by al-Qa`ida from Sudan to Saudi Arabia.<sup>9</sup> According to a declassified Iraqi document, Bin Ladin met with an Iraqi government representative in Khartoum in early 1995 and discussed "carrying out joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia.<sup>10</sup> The Yemeni jihadist Nasir al-Bahri has also said that Bin Ladin "opened branches of the al-Qa`ida organization in Saudi Arabia" in 1996.<sup>11</sup>

The third reason to suspect al-Qa`ida involvement is that prior to the Khobar bombing Saudi Arabia experienced two violent attacks by Saudi Arab Afghans.<sup>12</sup> The first was the so-called al-Hudhayf incident in November 1994, in which Abdallah al-Hudhayf threw acid in the face of a police officer to avenge the arrest of the leaders of the moderate Islamist opposition two months earlier.<sup>13</sup> The second attack was the November 1995 car bombing of the U.S. training mission to the Saudi National Guard in central Riyadh, in which five Americans and two Indians were killed.<sup>14</sup> In their televised April 1995 confessions, the four

24 Americans were killed in two bombings is clear evidence of the huge anger of Saudi people against America. The Saudis now know their real enemy is America." See *Independent*, July 10, 1996. Later that year, Bin Ladin expressed his "joy at the killing of the American Soldiers in Riyadh and Khobar," which "are the sentiments of every Muslim." See *Nida'ul Islam* no. 15, December 1996. In March 1997, Bin Ladin told CNN that he considered as "heroes" those men who "killed the American occupiers in Riyadh and al-Khobar."

9 "Overview of the Enemy—Staff Statement Number 15," www.9-11commission.gov, April 16, 2004.

10 Peter Bergen, "Enemy of Our Enemy," *New York Times*, March 28, 2006.

11 *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, March 20, 2005.

12 According to the "Downing Report," there had also been three minor isolated attacks on U.S. personnel during the Gulf War in 1991.

13 "Statement 38," Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, 1995; Personal interview with Abdallah al-Utaybi, Riyadh, April 2004.

14 Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou*, pp. 73-82.

1 For detailed accounts of the Khobar bombing, see the three official inquiries: *The Khobar Towers Bombing Incident* (Washington, D.C.: House National Security Committee, August 14, 1996); *Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, September 15, 1996) (the so-called "Downing Report"); and *Independent Review of the Khobar Towers Bombing* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Air Force, October 31, 1996). See also Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou* (Washington, D.C.: WINEP, 2000), pp. 83-98; Anthony Cordesman, *Islamic Extremism in Saudi Arabia and the Attack on al-Khobar* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, June 2001); and Ed Blanche, "Security and Stability in the Middle East—The Al-Khobar Factor," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 13:6 (2001).

2 Estimates of the quantity of explosives used vary from "3,000-8,000 pounds" (Downing Report) to "20,000 pounds" (Air Force Report).

3 *U.S.A. v. Ahmed al-Mughassil et al.*, Eastern District of Virginia, 2001.

4 "Perry: U.S. Eyed Iran Attack after Bombing," UPI, June 6, 2007. On December 22, 2006, a U.S. federal court ruled that Iran was responsible for the bombing and ordered that the Iranian government pay \$254 million to the families of the 19 U.S. citizens killed. See Carol D. Leonnig, "Iran Held Liable In Khobar Attack," *Washington Post*, December 23, 2006.

alleged perpetrators, three of whom were Arab Afghans, said they were influenced by Usama bin Ladin, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Saad al-Faqih.<sup>15</sup> Although the Riyadh attack was initiated “from below” and not orchestrated by Bin Ladin himself, it showed that Sunni militants were able and willing to use car bombings against U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, a specific piece of intelligence would seem to link Bin Ladin to Khobar. A retired CIA official has said that two days after the bombing, the National Security Agency intercepted phone calls from al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri and Ashra Hadi (head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad) allegedly congratulating Bin Ladin on the Khobar attack.<sup>17</sup>

On closer inspection, however, these four arguments do not hold scrutiny. First, Bin Ladin’s statements on Khobar amount to endorsements, not claims of responsibility. It is entirely natural that Bin Ladin, when prompted by a journalist, would speak positively about an attack on a U.S. military target in Saudi Arabia. Second, the operational capacity of Bin Ladin’s network in Saudi Arabia in the mid-1990s was not as high as is often assumed. Bin Ladin’s exile in Sudan and association with revolutionary-minded Egyptian militants had weakened his links to the Saudi Islamist scene, and many of his potential collaborators were imprisoned after the 1995 Riyadh bombing.<sup>18</sup> Third, the Khobar attack differed considerably from any operation undertaken by Sunni Islamists in Saudi Arabia both before and after 1996. The Khobar bomb contained between 20 and 100 times more explosives than the November 1995 Riyadh bomb. The expertise for such an operation does not seem to have

existed in the Saudi jihadist community in the 1990s. Fourth, the report of the alleged congratulatory calls, apart from being uncorroborated by other sources, does not constitute evidence of direct responsibility. Bin Ladin himself did not initiate the calls, and presumably he did not explicitly admit responsibility in his response, as this would also have been reported.

More importantly, anyone arguing in favor of the al-Qa`ida hypothesis would have to explain two spectacular gaps in the record of evidence on Khobar. The first gap is the absence of any forensic or other direct evidence linking al-Qa`ida to the operation. This absence is all the more glaring when compared to the wealth of publicly available

### **“The expertise for such an operation does not seem to have existed in the Saudi jihadist community in the 1990s.”**

evidence on other al-Qa`ida operations and on other violent incidents, large and small, involving Sunni militants in the Saudi kingdom. Although secret evidence may exist, it is doubtful that it would be in large quantities. A former U.S. intelligence official has noted that in the course of reviewing the bulk of the evidence on the Khobar attack during 1996-1997, he never saw any reliable evidence of al-Qa`ida involvement.<sup>19</sup>

The second gap is the silence on Khobar in the jihadist literature. The Saudi jihadist literature treats Khobar quite differently from other incidents in the kingdom in the 1990s, such as the Riyadh bombing, the al-Hudhayf affair or the 1998 Hijaz missile plot. While Abdallah al-Hudhayf and the Riyadh bombers are hailed as martyrs and the Hijaz missile plotters proudly named, no reference has ever been made to the identities of the Khobar bombers.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, while several al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula militants have highlighted their links to the Riyadh bombers, no one has claimed a connection to the Khobar attackers. On the contrary, al-Qa`ida representative Yusuf al-`Uyayri later blasted Saudi authorities for innocently arresting and torturing him

in the wake of the Khobar attack before “God allowed for the real perpetrator to be discovered.”<sup>21</sup> Al-`Uyayri’s assessment is particularly important and credible because he grew up in Dammam and knew the jihadist community in the Eastern Province well.

In other words, it seems unlikely that Bin Ladin orchestrated the Khobar bombing. Did al-Qa`ida play an indirect and low-profile role in the attack?

### **Al-Qa`ida-Iran Collaboration?**

Another hypothesis that enjoys support in certain U.S. government and intelligence circles is that al-Qa`ida secretly collaborated with Shi`a militants in an Iran-sponsored attack on Khobar. The 9/11 Commission, for example, noted that “we have seen strong but indirect evidence that his organization did in fact play some as yet unknown role in the Khobar attack.”<sup>22</sup> This hypothesis is part of a broader theory about a secret alliance between Iran and al-Qa`ida dating back to the early 1990s and facilitated by the legendary Hizb Allah operative Imad Mughniyyeh.<sup>23</sup>

The nature and full scale of the alleged evidence for this theory is difficult to assess because it has remained classified to this day. The principal open source information pointing to the existence of an Iran-al-Qa`ida alliance is the testimony of former al-Qa`ida member Jamal al-Fadl in the so-called Embassy Bombings Trial in 2001. Al-Fadl said that around 1993 Abu Hajir al-Iraqi, a prominent al-Qa`ida ideologue, advocated cooperation between Sunnis and Shi`a in the fight against the United States.<sup>24</sup> Al-Fadl also allegedly witnessed a meeting between al-Qa`ida leaders and an Iranian representative in Khartoum.<sup>25</sup> Al-

15 “Four Saudis Held for Riyadh Blasts,” *Arab News*, April 23, 1996.

16 The 9/11 Report concluded that “nothing proves that Bin Ladin ordered [the 1995 Riyadh] attack.” See 9/11 Report, p. 60. Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef ruled out al-Qa`ida involvement. See *al-Siyasa*, November 4, 1998. Bin Ladin’s former bodyguard Nasir al-Bahri denied such a connection. See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, March 31, 2005. Bin Ladin himself expressed regret at not having been involved. See his interview with CNN, March 1997.

17 Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals* (London: A. Deutsch, 1999), p. 187; Lawrence Wright, “The Man behind Bin Laden,” *New Yorker*, September 16, 2002.

18 Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia, 1979-2006: The Power and Perils of Pan-Islamic Nationalism*, Ph.D. Thesis, Sciences-Po Paris, 2007, p. 343ff.

19 Personal interview, Wayne White, February 2, 2008.

20 See, for example, Abu Jandal al-Azdi, “Khuribat Amrika,” *www.qa3edoon.com*, 2003, p. 81.

21 *Sawt al-Jihad*, no. 1 (2003), p. 17. In another text, al-`Uyayri criticized the government for its “premature” accusations against the people on the “list of 19” for the May 12, 2003 Riyadh bombings, saying “they did not issue verdicts against the *rafida* who blew up Khobar.” See “ghazwat al-hadi ‘ashar min rabi’ al-awwal: ‘amaliyyat sharq al-riyadh wa-harbuna ma’ amrika wa ‘umala’iha,” *www.qa3edoon.com*, September 3, 2003, p. 45.

22 “Overview of the Enemy—Staff Statement Number 15,” 9/11 Commission, April 16, 2004.

23 See, for example, Dan Eggen, “9/11 Panel Links Al Qaeda, Iran,” *Washington Post*, June 26, 2004; Al Venter, “Bin Laden’s Tripartite Pact,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* 10:11 (1998).

24 *U.S.A. v. UBL*, p. 287.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

Fadl further said that a group of al-Qa`ida members, including top al-Qa`ida operative Sayf al-Adl, went to south Lebanon in the early 1990s to train with Hizb Allah.<sup>26</sup> Some have interpreted Iran's post-9/11 refusal to extradite top al-Qa`ida leaders (among whom Sayf al-Adl) as an indication of Tehran's fear of revealing its long-standing connections with al-Qa`ida.<sup>27</sup>

From an outside vantage point, it is not difficult to challenge this hypothesis. As interesting as al-Fadl's account may be, it is not corroborated by any other publicly available sources and thus hinges on one testimony alone. Moreover, there may

### **“Bin Ladin welcomed the operation, but he was probably not responsible.”**

be many reasons behind Iran's refusal to extradite al-Qa`ida leaders post-9/11. Needless to say, a number of al-Qa`ida associates have categorically denied the existence of a link between al-Qa`ida and Iran.<sup>28</sup> Finally, this hypothesis still does not answer the question of the nature of al-Qa`ida's alleged contribution to the Khobar operation. Until significant new evidence to the contrary is made public, this must be considered a conspiracy theory.

#### **Conclusion**

Of course, conspiracies do occur, and nothing is impossible in the murky world of terrorism and espionage. Nevertheless, in the case of the Khobar bombing, the straightforward explanation is both more plausible and supported by more evidence.

Both the U.S. and the Saudi investigations concluded that the operation was carried out by a cell affiliated with the radical Shi`a

group Hizb Allah al-Hijaz (or Saudi Hizb Allah).<sup>29</sup> The pro-Khomeini Hizb Allah al-Hijaz had never accepted the deal struck in 1993 between the pro-Shirazi Shi`a opposition and the Saudi regime.<sup>30</sup> No less anti-American than their Sunni Islamist counterparts, the radical Shi`a splinter group may have seen the Khobar attack as a way to demonstrate strength, protest against the 1993 peace deal and embarrass the Saudi regime. They may also have speculated that an attack on a U.S. target would not spark the same draconian retaliation as would an attack on a Saudi government target. The scale and professional execution of the attack was due to the instruction and logistical assistance provided by the Lebanese Hizb Allah. Whether or not there was official Iranian support is another issue which cannot be assessed in academia.

Al-Qaida's involvement in the 1996 Khobar bombing, however, can be ruled out until substantial new evidence to the contrary emerges. Bin Ladin welcomed the operation, but he was probably not responsible. In fact, his strongest link to the bombing may have been the involvement of his family's construction company, the Saudi Bin Ladin Group, in the rebuilding of the Khobar Towers site.<sup>31</sup>

*Dr. Thomas Hegghammer is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Princeton University and a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI). He is the author of Jihad in Arabia (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) and the co-author of Al-Qaida dans le texte (Paris: PUF, 2005). Dr. Hegghammer has published widely on militant Islamism and has conducted extensive fieldwork in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. His current research focuses on jihadism in Saudi Arabia, radical Islamist ideology and the history of the Arab Afghans. Dr. Hegghammer is currently writing a book about the life and ideology of Abdullah Azzam.*

## **Return of the Arabs: Al-Qa`ida's Current Military Role in the Afghan Insurgency**

By Brian Glyn Williams

IN THE PASHTUN TRIBAL belt, from the JDAM-blasted ruins of Usama bin Ladin's bombed out terrorist camp at Darunta near Jalalabad to the "red zone" between the volatile provinces of Khost and Paktia, local Afghans are increasingly talking in concerned tones about the return of the "Araban" or "Ikhwanis," as Arab fighters are known in Pashtu.<sup>1</sup> Wealthy al-Qa`ida financiers are said to be lurking in the distant mountains distributing large sums of cash to Pashtun tribes on the other side of the Pakistani border, hardened Arab fighters from Iraq are rumored to be training Pashtuns in the previously taboo tactic of suicide bombing and al-Qa`ida leaders are reported to have an increasingly strong voice in the Taliban *shuras* (councils) in Waziristan and Quetta. If the rumors are true, it seems that al-Qa`ida is putting renewed emphasis on galvanizing military resistance in a land that has tremendous symbolism in jihadist circles as the original theater of action for the modern jihad movement.

The following is a preliminary effort to sift through these vague rumors and reports in order to gain a clear picture of al-Qa`ida's actual role in a Taliban guerrilla war that has, to all outward appearances, morphed into an Iraqi-style terrorist insurgency.

#### **Precursors: Al-Qa`ida's Field Army**

In 1987, Usama bin Ladin proudly proclaimed that the somnolent Arab youth living under the *munafiq* (apostate) governments of the Middle East could come to his Ma`sada al-Ansar (Lion's Den of the Companions, a tunnel base built in the mountains of the Afghan border province of Paktia) to fight for their honor and faith against the "atheist infidels." By all accounts, Bin Ladin and his "Ansars" subsequently fought ferociously against Soviet *Spetsnaz* (Special Forces), defending their positions with mortars, RPGs, machine guns and AK-47s.

While many media savvy Arab volunteers

26 Ibid., pp. 290-291. The group that went to Lebanon allegedly included Abu Talha al-Sudani, Sayf al-Islam al-Masri, Abu Ja'far al-Masri, Abu Salim al-Masri and Sayf al-Adl.

27 Peter Finn and Susan Schmidt, "Iran, al Qaeda and Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2003.

28 In a 1994 interview, Ayman al-Zawahiri responded fiercely to allegations of such cooperation. See Ayman al-Zawahiri, "mawqifna min iran - al-radd 'ala tuhmat al-ta'awun bayna al-haraka al-jihadiyya al-salafiyya wa iran al-rafdiyya," *al-Ansar*, no. 91 (1994). Another witness in the Embassy Bombings Trial, L'Houssaine Kherchtou, rejected the possibility of links between al-Qa`ida and the Iranians; *U.S.A. v. UBL*, p. 1385.

29 For summaries of the available evidence, see references in footnote 1. Further classified evidence allegedly supports this conclusion; former intelligence officials with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research who followed the Khobar investigation saw convincing independent evidence linking Saudi Hizb Allah to the bombing. Personal interview, Wayne White, February 2, 2008.

30 Gerd Nonneman, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Iris Glosemeyer, *Terrorism, Gulf Security and Palestine: Key Issues for an EU-GCC Dialogue* (Florence: European University Institute, 2002), pp. 30-31.

31 Jane Mayer, "The House of Bin Laden," *New Yorker*, November 5, 2001.

1 Personal interviews, Pashtun tribal belt, April-May 2007.



earned a reputation as “gucci jihadists” during the Soviet period, some did move on to become seasoned fighters. In the late 1990s, for example, Bin Ladin helped make the Arab jihadist dream of fielding a bona fide Arab *jund* (army) come true when he formed the O55 International Brigade to fight against the Northern Alliance. Based in Rishikor, a former Communist base just outside Kabul, this foreign legion—which was often known as the *Ansars* (Companions)—played a key role in the Taliban’s defense of Kabul against Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, and in the Taliban conquests of Northern Alliance General Rashid Dostum’s capital at Mazar-i-Sharif and Massoud’s capital of Taloqan.

In addition to their activities as terrorists who attack “soft” civilian targets, as seen in the case of the infamous Hamburg *akhund* (cell) that attacked the U.S. mainland on 9/11, al-Qa`ida also had a fighting wing. This branch was engaged in frontal combat, often driving old Soviet-era tanks, utilizing light artillery and acting as shock troops for the Taliban in their struggles with the Northern Alliance. Thousands of Arabs in Afghanistan actually fought under al-Qa`ida’s *al-Raya* (flag) in frontal combat from 1997-2001. Arab fighters who were trained in these camps bolstered the Taliban regime when it decided to confront the U.S.-led coalition in the fall of 2001. In light of their well-known fervor, it is not surprising that Arab fighters tenaciously held their positions in Taloqan, Kunduz, Kabul and Kandahar when the indigenous Taliban proved less inclined to fight to the death.

Yet, the technologically advanced Americans were not the Soviets, and key al-Qa`ida military leaders Juma Namangani (the military head of the O55 International Brigade) and Muhammad `Atif (al-Qa`ida’s military leader) were killed by precision-guided U.S. munitions in November 2001. With the Arab state-within-a-state in the Taliban Emirate of Afghanistan collapsing around them by December 2001, the Arab *Ansars* withdrew from Kabul and Kandahar to the remote Shah-i-Kot Valley of eastern Afghanistan. In this valley they fought with greater effect against U.S. troops in 2002’s Operation Anaconda, an asymmetric guerrilla fight that more closely resembled the mujahidin’s skirmishes with Soviet heliborne *Spetsnaz* troops in the 1980s.

Following the mixed success of Shah-i-Kot, the remaining Arab fighters retreated over the border into Pakistan where they were given sanctuary by major Taliban leaders such as Jalaladin Haqqani, who had fought alongside Arabs in the Khost area during the 1980s. Up and coming middle-ranked Taliban commanders, such as Baitullah Mehsud and Nek Muhammad, also provided the Arabs and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan jihadists with sanctuary in the Waziri tribal lands of North and South Waziristan. Another Pakistani tribal agency to the north, Bajaur, served as the third fallback area for retreating Arab fighters. Ominously, all three border agencies previously had a history of serving as rear area staging grounds for Arab and Afghan mujahidin during the 1980s jihad and they would soon serve that role again.

#### Building a “Pyre for the Americans”

While many in the West thought al-Qa`ida was nearly finished in the aftermath of the toppling of the Taliban, the coalition had a difficult time killing or capturing high-value targets such as Bin Ladin, Ayman al-Zawahiri (who narrowly missed being killed by a Hellfire missile strike in 2006) and a new generation of leaders who were operating in the Pashtun tribal areas, such as charismatic commander Abu Yahya al-Libi.<sup>2</sup> The latter leader seemed to be most successful in running a media operation with al-Sahab Media Production (The Clouds, which refers to the cloud covered mountains of Afghanistan). It was this media operation that began to provide a unique window into al-Qa`ida’s re-calibrated military operations in Afghanistan.

While the media-savvy al-Qa`ida in Iraq leader Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi stole the limelight from 2003-2005, by 2005 al-Libi’s media service began to compete with Iraqi insurgent webpages. Al-Libi began by posting a series of online videos that showed small numbers of Arabs carrying out attacks on “Christian *kafirs* (infidels) and puppet *munafiq* (apostate) Afghan army troops.” These included such videos as “Pyre for the Americans in Afghanistan” and “The Winds of Paradise.”<sup>3</sup>

2 Although in December 2005 a senior operational planner, Abu Hamza Rabia, was killed in a Predator attack in North Waziristan.

3 See Qaeda al-Jihad’s surprisingly sophisticated video at [www.liveleak.com/view?i=184\\_1201720200](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=184_1201720200).

Al-Libi’s propaganda films featured combat footage of Arabs carrying out suicide bombings against U.S. soldiers, firing mortars at U.S. Forward Operating Bases (including one sequence that shows Arabs firing shells with the name Zarqawi painted on them), using IEDs against U.S. troops and ambushing U.S. soldiers.<sup>4</sup> According to the Arabic sub-headings, these videos were filmed in a series of Pashtun border provinces in Afghanistan ranging from Kunar Province in the north to Uruzgan and Zabul in the south.<sup>5</sup> In other words, these were the very border provinces where the first generation of Arab Afghan volunteers (many of whom had married local women, learned Pashtu and settled in the region) had fought in the 1980s.

By 2006, a more developed al-Sahab began to feature jihad *anasheed* (songs), video montage epitaphs for dozens of slain Turkish and Arab martyrs from Kuwait, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and images of young Arabs wearing the Arab Ansar al-Mujahidin “uniform”—Arab *kaffiyya* scarves or Afghan *pakbols* (the round felt hat that became a status symbol for the first generation of Arab Afghan jihadists), Afghan-style *shakwar kameez* baggy shirts, camouflage jackets and the mandatory sneakers. The videos also showed platoon sized units of Arab fighters training in the forested mountains of Waziristan with AK-47 assault rifles, PK machine guns, RPG-7s, mortars and even anti-aircraft guns.<sup>6</sup> By 2007, they also featured images of Arab fighters ambushing Pakistani soldiers in the mountains of Waziristan, and the Pakistani authorities began to suspect that Arabs were bolstering the Taliban insurgency in their country.<sup>7</sup>

As in the previous jihad against the Soviets, the Arab fighters seemed much more concerned about photographing

4 For an example of an Arab attack on a convoy, see “As-Sahab Media: Mujahideen Attack and Destroy Supply Convoy of Occupation American Forces in Afghan,” available at [www.liveleak.com/view?i=96a\\_1185478707](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=96a_1185478707).

5 See, for example, “Pyre for the Americans in Kharsan—Video of Mine Explosion Near a Gathering of American Forces in Konar,” available at [www.archive.org/details/Konar-Afghanistan](http://www.archive.org/details/Konar-Afghanistan).

6 See, for example, “Taleban/Al Qaeda Training Camp in Waziristan,” available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuJYY9YgJg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuJYY9YgJg&feature=related).

7 See, for example, “The Mujahideen of Waziristan,” available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_kDBEJRDPi&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_kDBEJRDPi&NR=1).

and filming themselves than their simple Afghan hosts, and this appears to be part of a calculated effort to recruit young men for the jihad in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By 2007, jihadist websites from Chechnya to Turkey to the Arab world began to feature recruitment ads calling on the “Lions of Islam” to come fight in Afghanistan. It appears that many heeded the call.<sup>8</sup> This was especially true after the Anbar Awakening of anti-al-Qa`ida tribal leaders and General David Petraeus’ “surge strategy” made Iraq less hospitable for foreign volunteers.

**Al-Qa`ida Adds an Edge to Taliban Insurgency**  
Since 2002, one of al-Qa`ida’s main roles has been diverting wealth from the Arab Gulf States to funding the struggling Taliban. One recently killed Saudi shaykh named Asadullah, for example, was described as “the moneybags in the entire tribal belt.” Men like Asadullah have paid bounties for Taliban attacks on coalition troops, provided money to Taliban commanders such as Baitullah Mehsud to encourage them to attack Pakistani troops and launch a suicide bombing campaign in that country, and used their funds to re-arm the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> Local Pashtuns in Waziristan and in Afghanistan’s Kunar Province have claimed that the Arab fighters pay well for lodging and food and provide money for the families of those who are “martyred” in suicide operations. According to online videos and local reports, al-Qa`ida is also running as many as 29 training camps in the region, albeit less elaborate than those found in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

The Arabs have also played a key role in “al-Qa`idifying” the Taliban insurgency and importing the horror tactics of the Iraqi conflict to Afghanistan. Key Taliban leaders, such as the recently slain Mullah Dadullah, have claimed that they learned suicide bombing techniques from their Arab “brothers.”<sup>10</sup> Al-Qa`ida has

also distributed tutorial jihadist videos throughout the Pashtun regions that give instructions on how to build car bombs, IEDs and inspirational “snuff film” images of U.S. troops being killed in Iraq. The first wave of suicide bombings in Afghanistan seems to have been carried out by Arabs, and it appears clear that it was al-Qa`ida—which has long had an emphasis on *istishbad* (martyrdom) operations—that taught the local Taliban this alien tactic.

### **“By 2007, jihadist websites from Chechnya to Turkey to the Arab world began to feature recruitment ads calling on the ‘Lions of Islam’ to come fight in Afghanistan.”**

Arabs such as Abu Yahya al-Libi have also been influential in encouraging the technophobic Taliban fundamentalists to create “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” online videos of Zarqawi style beheadings, IED attacks and suicide bombings.

Furthermore, it appears that Arab fighters have actively partaken in insurgent activities within Afghanistan itself in increasing numbers. Insurgents in the Kunar Valley in Nuristan, for example, have chosen Abu Ikhlas al-Masri, an Egyptian who speaks Pashtu and is married to a local woman, to lead a group of as many as 170 fighters. Arab operations in this area are facilitated by its cross-border proximity to Bajaur Agency and support from a local Taliban leader named Ahmad Shah and insurgent leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the latter of which has a long history of working with Arabs. Arabs have also filmed themselves attacking coalition targets in Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Uruzgan, Logar and Zabul provinces.<sup>11</sup>

previously had taboos on suicide bombing, see Brian Glyn Williams, “Afghan Suicide Bombing,” *Islamic Affairs Analyst*, August 13, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, an Arab attack in Khost, “As-Sahab Media: Mujahideen fire BM rockets on Occupation American Base in Afghanistan,” available at [www.liveleak.com/view?i=01f1185675192](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=01f1185675192); and an Arab attack on a U.S. convoy in Zabul, available at [www.liveleak.com/view?i=dc11184687663](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=dc11184687663).

Most recently, Arabs have also been sighted farther afield fighting in the unstable southern province of Helmand under a first generation Arab Afghan leader named Abu Haris.<sup>12</sup> Local Helmandi villagers also reported seeing Arab fighters in the village of Musa Qala, a town that was occupied by the Taliban for most of 2007.<sup>13</sup> They reported that the Arab fighters set up suicide bombing facilities and were extremely brutal.<sup>14</sup> As in previous eras where they earned a reputation for butchery (in 1991, for example, Arab fighters hacked captured Communist Afghan Army soldiers to pieces following the capture of Jalalabad), the Taliban’s Arab allies were reported to have executed locals they suspected of being “spies.”

Such actions hardly endeared the locals to the Taliban, and there are bound to be future tensions between the Arabs and the Taliban that echo those that often caused “red on red” conflict between Afghan mujahidin and Arab Wahhabis in the 1980s. The distrust between the Arabs—who come to the “backward” lands of Afghanistan from the comparatively developed Gulf States—are said to stem from the Arab puritans’ disdain for local Afghan Sufi “superstitions,” their most un-Afghan desire to achieve “martyrdom” and their wish to lead their own fighting units.

A local Taliban commander captured the ambiguous nature of the Taliban-al-Qa`ida alliance when he claimed of the Arabs: “They come for the sacred purpose of jihad. They fight according to Shari`a law.” He then, however, added an important caveat: “No foreign fighter can serve as a Taliban commander.”<sup>15</sup> Even key al-Qa`ida field commanders, such as the recently slain Libyan leader Abu Laith al-Libi (the commander who led al-Qa`ida’s retreat from Afghanistan in 2001), operated under the command of

<sup>12</sup> Abu Haris appears to have created his own mixed Arab Afghan unit called the Jaysh al-Mahdi. See Waliullah Rahmani, “Al-Qaeda Uses Jaish al-Mahdi to Gain Control over Helmand Province,” *Terrorism Focus* 4:34 (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Jason Straziuso, “U.S. Intensifies Fight Near Taliban-held Town; Talks Under Way to Oust Arab Fighters,” Associated Press, October 28, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> “All Eyes on Musa Qala,” [www.afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), October 10, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> “Foreign Taleban Rile Helmand Residents,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, October 30, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly, Turks seem to be joining the jihad in Afghanistan, and their martyrdom epitaphs and calls for Turks to fight in Afghanistan have appeared on such jihadist websites as [www.cihaderi.net](http://www.cihaderi.net). For more on Turkish involvement, see Brian Glyn Williams, “Turks Join the Jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Terrorism Focus* 3:47 (2006).

<sup>9</sup> Zarqawi declared a jihad against the Musharraf “puppet” government, and al-Qa`ida agents have tried killing the Pakistani leader on more than one occasion.

<sup>10</sup> For the direct role of Arabs in transferring suicide bombing tactics from Iraq to the Deobandi Taliban, who

Mullah Omar.

Despite the potential for tensions, al-Qa`ida's head of operations in Afghanistan, an Egyptian named Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid, who is said to have good relations with the Taliban, has proclaimed that al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan recognizes the authority of Mullah Omar. For its part, the Taliban has charged one Mehmood Haq Yar, a Taliban commander who has allegedly been to Iraq to learn the Iraqi insurgents' tactics, with making sure Arabs play a role in the Afghan jihad. It appears that both sides are united in their desire to topple the Hamid Karzai government and carve out an Islamic state in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

### Conclusion

While it is difficult to estimate the number of Arab fighters in the region,<sup>16</sup> it seems obvious that al-Qa`ida central is determined to play a key role as a fundraiser, recruiter and direct contributor to the military efforts in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, unlike the earlier generation of "gucci jihadists" who made little if any real contribution to the jihad against the Soviets, the current generation seems determined to remind the West that the "Lions of Islam" have not forgotten the "Forgotten War" in Afghanistan.

*Brian Glyn Williams is currently Associate Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. Previously he taught at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies. In addition to his scholarship, which includes numerous articles on jihadi terrorism, ethnic violence, and nationalism in Islamic Eurasia, he has a book entitled The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation (2001). His field work has ranged from Kosovo to Kashmir to Kazakhstan and varies from living with Northern Alliance warlords in Afghanistan to interviewing Kosovar Albanian field commanders. Most recently he served as an expert witness at Guantanamo Bay in the case of Salim Hamdan, Bin Ladin's driver.*

16 Coalition forces have killed or arrested hundreds of foreigners; Afghan government officials have spoken of "hundreds" of Arabs operating in some provinces; and the Pakistanis claim to have arrested thousands and killed 488 foreign fighters since 2001.

17 Sahil Nagpal, "600 Pakistan Security Men Killed in 28 Suicide Attacks After Lal Masjid Operation," ANI, November 14, 2007.

## After Action Report: An Army Lieutenant's View of AQI's Operations in al-Khidr and Hanaswa

By First Lieutenant Jon Patrick Cheatwood

THE IRAQI VILLAGES OF al-Khidr and Hanaswa are located immediately east of the Euphrates River. They are simple, small towns, similar to what one would find driving through Kansas. On December 10, 2007, elements from Berserker Company and attachments began operations aimed at clearing 4.7 kilometers north along the Euphrates to al-Khidr, an area controlled completely by al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI), according to intelligence estimates. The purpose of this report is to highlight operations undertaken against al-Qa`ida in Iraq and to add substantively to recent academic discussions regarding AQI from analysis derived at the tactical level.

### The Move North

Moving into al-Khidr immediately after seizing a foothold south of the town was an eerie experience. The bombed-out remnants of houses in the area displayed little to no signs of life as the vast majority of the town had been reduced to rubble. It was a matter of days before

**"The areas our operations were designed to clear allegedly contained between as many as 30-50 active AQI members or sympathizers."**

we encountered the first residents of the village (all of whom were returning to al-Khidr from towns to the north and east). Flatbed trucks carried the lives of families displaced as social networks slowly filtered back into the area. Elements of AQI who had inhabited al-Khidr when we began our operations were not present; it was clear that they had vacated and left little behind for coalition forces to find aside from the emptiness caused by their prior residence.

A line in the sand existed subsequent to the arrival of Berserker Company. Prior

intelligence assessments had clearly defined the communities to our north as safe havens for AQI since a coalition presence did not exist north of a small school known as OP3. The areas our operations were designed to clear allegedly contained between as many as 30-50 active AQI members or sympathizers. Estimates at the time asserted that AQI had taken over the towns of Hanaswa and al-Khidr through intimidation, harassment and murder. Families from those areas were forced to choose between retaining their homes while supporting AQI, relocating elsewhere, or not supporting AQI and accepting the risk associated with such a decision. Established and with unmitigated control, AQI planned operations against coalition forces and the government of Iraq, and Shari`a law was reportedly imposed. As best understood, this was the portrait of areas to our north.

For approximately eight days, U.S. forces, in conjunction with the Iraqi Army and Concerned Local Citizen (CLC) groups, worked to clear north along a stretch of road parallel to the Euphrates. Exceptional air strikes preceded the beginning of the operation, totaling 2,500 pounds in close air support munitions alone.<sup>1</sup> Moving north, soldiers took limited small-arms fire and were hit by three Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), thanks in large part to the route clearance team attached to Berserker Company that was able to find multiple IEDs along routes in the area.<sup>2</sup> Operationally, the movement north also focused on the emplacement of CLC locations. Similar to the *sabwa*, or "awakening councils," witnessed in other provinces, the partnership between Sunni Iraqis and U.S. forces called for groups of locals to join in defense of their communities against extremist elements. As we moved, emplacing CLC locations became a key task, with the goal of securing lines of communication along the Euphrates River Valley being critical to our success.<sup>3</sup>

1 These figures were confirmed by 1LT Marshall Tucker, Fire Support Officer for B/3-7 IN. Army aviation and field artillery assets also provided critical fire support leading up to and during operations in the area, destroying safe houses while also providing immediate support to soldiers on the ground.

2 Route Clearance Team and soldiers from B/3-7 IN found 22 different types of IEDs or assorted caches during the same period.

3 Total amount of U.S. dollars spent on CLC programs



Offensive operations ended with the establishment of Patrol Base Kelsey just south of the Iskandariyya Canal.<sup>4</sup> In the coming months, Berserker Company will attempt to maintain security and build in the areas cleared of AQI. To date, local leaders have signed eight contracts employing approximately 2,500 local nationals in the CLC program.

#### Defining al-Qa`ida in Iraq Today

One of the more interesting topics of contemporary debate focuses on the significance and status of AQI. Some scholars have been quick to proclaim the defeat of AQI, and while evidence to support such conclusions does exist, careful analysis remains to be completed. What follows is an assessment of AQI in our area of operations, which ideally will add to further discussions occurring throughout Iraq.

The strength of the ideology underpinning AQI is perhaps the first and most important measure needing assessment when addressing the state of the group today. The extent with which ideology played in the al-Khidr and Hanaswa areas remains ambiguous. As is often the case, identifying the true motivations of those associated with extremist groups can often be a complicated matter. Nevertheless, interactions with locals—many of whom were previously displaced—often reveal an image of AQI that appears largely criminal in nature. Members of AQI in al-Khidr and Hanaswa received support from families through coercion. They conducted recruitment in a similar manner; the decision not to join AQI carried great risk. Intimidation trumped ideology; power often meant more than political change. If this representation is accurate and jihadist tenets have taken a backseat to simple gang behavior, we indeed face a much different threat.

Composition is another factor deserving consideration when assessing the current condition of AQI. Operations undertaken to clear AQI were unable to discover significant evidence that would reveal the identities of key leadership in the area or profiles of the enemy. Based off interviews, however, it appears that the vast majority of individuals affiliated

with AQI were Iraqi. The majority of these personnel also hailed from the al-Khidr and Hanaswa areas. It does appear that the composition of AQI has been degraded both by the emergence of the Sunni *sabwa* and infighting with other insurgent groups.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the difficulties associated with “pragmatic considerations” highlighted by Dr. Mohammed M. Hafez seem to factor into the failure of AQI here as well.<sup>6</sup> Strategic missteps have disabled AQI at the tactical level.



1LT Jon P. Cheatwood, SGT Thomas Putnoky, SSG Robert Korish and SSG Brian Spera (left to right) at the location of a cache found east of Hanaswa - January 2008.

The elements of AQI that existed in the al-Khidr area seem to have been homegrown; however, the extent that ideology actually influenced these individuals remains up for debate. Although it appears the jihadist leadership vacated the area, the localized nature of the threat points to a support network that has likely gone underground. It is possible that in the near future elements of AQI will attempt to re-infiltrate. Today, however, relative peace characterizes the area.

#### Moving Forward: Potential and Problems

The push to al-Khidr was an operational success, and today AQI is largely defeated in our sector. Counter-insurgency now demands taking requisite actions to ensure that operational success leads to greater overall victory. In the coming months, the goal must be to capitalize on the current situation, while attempting to resolve outstanding problems in AO Berserker.

<sup>5</sup> Arguments from Mohammed M. Hafez's “Al-Qa`ida Losing Ground in Iraq” analysis in the December 2007 issue of the *CTC Sentinel* hold true in our area of operations. Specifically, the discussion of conflicting agendas between AQI and more nationalistic Sunni insurgent groups holds true.  
<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Vigilant patrolling will likely keep a defeated AQI in check. There is a strong sense that significant numbers of individuals formerly aligned with AQI currently form the ranks of recently developed CLC programs. In our case, the question of whether this current alignment constitutes an ideological victory is questionable. Also troubling is the fact that the CLC program has made the U.S. military a primary means of employment in the region; this is a burden that is likely to be unsustainable and adds little to the region's long-term economic infrastructure.

Following operational success with small victories is the best way to benefit from the promise currently in place. These small victories should first be visible, demonstrating to the population the positive change occurring since the move north to al-Khidr.<sup>7</sup> Second, every effort should ensure that the programs undertaken actually add to basic infrastructure needed throughout the region. Creating these victories will be no small task.

As with most counter-insurgency struggles, creating durable accomplishments from operational successes remains the fundamental, outstanding question. Capitalizing on the promise currently in place, while also ensuring security, will likely offer the best chance for coalition success.

*First Lieutenant Jon Patrick Cheatwood is an infantry officer serving as a platoon leader with Berserker Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Infantry Regiment stationed out of Fort Stewart, Georgia. 1LT Cheatwood graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2006 with a BS in American Politics. His military awards include the Airborne and Air Assault badges, as well as the Ranger tab.*

in our area of operations currently stands at \$1,770,750.

<sup>4</sup> The patrol base established was named after SGT Samuel Kelsey, E/3-7 IN, who tragically lost his life during operations on December 13, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> One of Berserker Company's first small victories occurred when it hosted a MEDCAP in al-Khidr on January 28, 2008, which treated more than 200 individuals from the local area.

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

January 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside IED injured four Canadian soldiers in Kandahar Province's Panjwahi district. – Canwest News Service, January 14

January 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Eight police officers were killed after Taliban militants stormed their checkpoint. The attack occurred in Maywand district of Kandahar Province. – AP, January 13

January 13, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Scotland Yard detectives investigating the death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto have found that al-Qa`ida-linked militants were likely responsible for the assassination. – *The Sunday Times*, January 13

January 14, 2008 (THAILAND): At least eight soldiers were killed when a bomb exploded in Chanae district of Narathiwat Province. – AP, January 14

January 14, 2008 (IRAQ): The U.S. military announced that with the assistance of Iraqi forces they killed 60 militants and detained 193 more during the first week of a large offensive against al-Qa`ida in northern Iraq. The operation was launched on January 8. – Reuters, January 14

January 14, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A group of militants attacked Kabul's luxury Serena Hotel, killing at least eight people. The Taliban claimed immediate responsibility. – CNN, January 14

January 14, 2008 (IRAQ): Appeals court judge Amir Jawdat al-Naeib was killed by gunmen while on his way to work. The high-ranking Sunni judge was killed in Mansour district of western Baghdad after he was ambushed by gunmen in two vehicles. – AP, January 15

January 15, 2008 (UNITED STATES): New charges were added in the "Fort Dix" court case, where five foreign-born Muslims face a number of charges revolving around an alleged plot to attack the U.S. military base at Fort Dix in 2007. The men include three ethnic Albanians from the former Yugoslavia, a Turk and a Jordanian. The trial is set for March 24, although it is expected to be delayed. –

AP, January 16

January 15, 2008 (LEBANON): Arrest warrants were issued for 10 al-Qa`ida suspects already in custody, charging them with a number of crimes, including planning to execute terrorist attacks. It is not clear when the 10 were originally detained. In addition, arrest warrants were issued for a separate 10 alleged al-Qa`ida militants who are not yet in custody. – AP, January 15

January 15, 2008 (LEBANON): A bomb targeted a U.S. Embassy vehicle in the Beirut suburb of Dora, killing three Lebanese bystanders and injuring the vehicle's driver. According to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, "The last time American interests were systematically targeted in Lebanon was in the 1980s, when bombings against U.S. Marine barracks and embassies in Beirut killed hundreds." – *Chicago Tribune*, January 16

January 16, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Militants believed linked to Baitullah Mehsud stormed a paramilitary fort in South Waziristan, killing 22 soldiers and taking some hostage. The attack, which was claimed by Tehrik-i-Taliban, involved approximately 200 fighters who charged the Sararogha Fort, breaking through the fort's walls with rockets and explosives. – AP, January 16

January 16, 2008 (UNITED STATES): Former congressman Mark Deli Siljander was indicted for allegedly sending more than \$130,000 to al-Qa`ida and Taliban supporter Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. According to the Associated Press, Siljander was charged with "money laundering, conspiracy and obstructing justice for allegedly lying about lobbying senators on behalf of an Islamic charity that authorities said was secretly sending funds to terrorists." The charges are part of a 42-count indictment against the Islamic American Relief Agency, a charity that was based in Columbia, Missouri and was designated as a terrorist fundraiser by the Treasury Department in 2004. – AP, January 16

January 16, 2008 (KUWAIT): The UN Security Council placed sanctions on three Kuwaitis charged with recruiting fighters for al-Qa`ida and funding the group's operations. The men—Hamid al-Ali, Jaber al-Jalamah and Mubarak Mushakhas Sanad al-Bathali—already had sanctions

imposed on them by the U.S. Treasury Department since December 2007. – AP, January 16

January 16, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber targeted Shi'a worshippers as they prepared for a ceremony marking `Ashura, the minority sect's holiest day. The attack, which took place in Diyala Province, killed at least nine people. According to the Associated Press, the attack marked the fourth case of a female suicide bombing in three months, all of which occurred in Diyala Province. – AP, January 16

January 16, 2008 (IRAQ): Three U.S. soldiers were killed by small-arms fire in Salah al-Din Province. – Reuters, January 16

January 17, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his payload in a Shi'a mosque in the Mohalla Jangi neighborhood of Peshawar, killing at least nine people. The attack occurred during the annual Shi'a festival of Muharram, and it is believed that the bomber was a teenage boy. – *New York Times*, January 18; *Los Angeles Times*, January 18

January 17, 2008 (IRAQ): Shi'a worshippers preparing for a ceremony marking `Ashura, the minority sect's holiest day, were targeted by a suicide bomber, leaving at least 11 dead. The attack, which occurred in Ba`quba in Diyala Province, took place at the door of a mosque. The incident is separate from a similar attack that occurred the previous day in Diyala Province, which involved a female suicide bomber. – AP, January 18

January 17, 2008 (PAKISTAN): According to news reports, Pakistani paramilitary troops fled the Sipla Toi military post in South Waziristan over concerns that militants were planning a raid on the base. The development comes a day after hundreds of militants associated with Tehrik-i-Taliban successfully overran a fort in South Waziristan Agency, killing more than 20 soldiers. – BBC, January 17

January 17, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced that her government would examine ways to remove al-Qa`ida-linked websites from the internet. "Where there is illegal material on the net, I want it removed," she told reporters. Smith said that she would work with experts

to find out “how you can filter out content, how you can work with Internet service providers, how you can work internationally to get illegal stuff off the Internet.” – AFP, January 18; *Financial Times*, January 18

January 18, 2008 (YEMEN): Two Belgium women and their Yemeni driver were gunned down in a remote desert mountain valley in Yemen’s eastern Hadramawt region. The two Belgium victims were part of a group of 15 Belgium tourists who were on an organized tour to visit ancient ruins and other historical attractions. The convoy of at least four vehicles was attacked as it was leaving the town of Hajrin, and it is believed that the assailants were affiliated with al-Qa`ida. – AP, January 19

January 18, 2008 (UNITED STATES): A New York court sentenced Canadian al-Qa`ida member Mohammed Mansour Jabarah to life in prison for his role in a plot to bomb U.S. embassies in Manila and Singapore in 2001. The 26-year-old militant is a Canadian citizen of Iraqi descent. After the 2001 plot was foiled by authorities in Singapore, Jabarah was apprehended in Oman in 2002. – AFP, January 18

January 18, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities apprehended 10 militants after a raid in the Tank area of the North-West Frontier Province. The military announced that some of the captured fighters were commanders. – Reuters, January 19

January 19, 2008 (SPAIN): Authorities apprehended 14 suspected Islamist terrorists for planning an attack on Barcelona. The suspects were Pakistani and Indian and allegedly belonged to Tablighi Jama`at, which is known as an Islamic proselytizing group. During the raids—conducted at the well-known Torek Ben Ziad mosque, but also including private apartments and a prayer hall—authorities discovered explosives materials such as timing devices. – *New York Times*, January 19

January 19, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani military forces announced the capture of 40 militants in the Chaghmalai area of South Waziristan. The announcement comes a day after militants ambushed a convoy in the same area, and they reportedly suffered 20-30 fatal casualties

after they were engaged by security forces. – Reuters, January 19

January 19, 2008 (GUINEA-BISSAU): Concerned that its decision to extradite five al-Qa`ida-linked terrorists on January 12 will make the country a target for retaliatory terrorist attacks, Guinea-Bissau has taken a number of security actions, including tightening border controls, increasing the number of police patrols and increasing inspection of foreigners. – Reuters, January 19

January 19, 2008 (IRAQ): Two U.S. soldiers were killed in separate incidents. One died in a roadside bomb in Arab Jabour, which is in southern Baghdad. The second soldier was killed during combat operations in Anbar Province. – Bloomberg, January 21

January 19, 2008 (IRAQ): Six policemen were killed outside their station by two to three suicide bombers near Ramadi in Anbar Province. – Reuters, January 20; AP, January 22

January 20, 2008 (ALGERIA): The U.S. Embassy in Algiers issued an official warning to U.S. citizens, stating that “in response to continuing indications of possible terrorist attacks in Algiers, the embassy has instructed its employees to avoid non-essential movements around the city until further notice, and may occasionally restrict movement completely.” The warning comes after a series of recent terrorist attacks in the country. At least 41 people were killed on December 11 when two suicide attacks hit the capital, one of which targeted UN staff. – AFP, January 20

January 20, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): One NATO soldier was killed, and five others wounded, when an explosion hit their convoy of vehicles. The attack took place in southern Afghanistan. – AFP, January 20

January 20, 2008 (MAURITANIA): Four suspected terrorists were charged with “furnishing logistical support to the perpetrators of a terrorist act” due to their alleged role in the killings of four French tourists on December 24, 2007. Four other suspects were released from custody. The government has said that the accused are linked to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – AP, January 20

January 20, 2008 (IRAQ): U.S. military warplanes bombed the Arab Jabour rural area in southern Baghdad with the goal of destroying roadside bombs and weapons caches. The attacks were part of Operation Phantom Phoenix, which began on January 8. The same area was bombed previously on January 10 and January 16, and the January 20 attack was an extension of those. – AFP, January 20

January 20, 2008 (IRAQ): Six people were killed in Anbar Province as a suicide bomber walked into the home of a man who had just been released from U.S. custody, blowing himself up and killing those celebrating the release in addition to the just released detainee. The attack took place near Falluja. – Reuters, January 20

January 21, 2008 (IRAQ): Approximately 18 people were killed as a suicide bomber detonated his payload inside a funeral tent. The attack took place in Hajaj village, which lies between Tikrit and Beiji—approximately 155 miles north of Baghdad. The target of the attack may have been Ahmed Abdullah, who is the deputy governor in charge of security for Salah al-Din Province. A witness told an AP reporter that policemen guarding the tent were not searching visitors. – AP, January 22

January 22, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber targeted a high school in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing one individual and wounding 21 more. According to an AP report, the bomber was “pushing an electric heater on top of a cart packed with explosives” and detonated the load at a gate in front of the school shortly after classes began. – AP, January 22

January 22, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Five Pakistani troops were killed as Islamist militants attacked a fort and observation post at Ladha in South Waziristan. A Pakistani military spokesman said that in the ensuing gunfight, approximately 37 militants were killed. Following the incident, the Pakistani military launched airstrikes on targets in Ladha. A statement released by a spokesman for the militants claimed that the number of their dead was exaggerated by the military, and that they had killed 10 soldiers and captured 13 more. It is believed that the attack was conducted by forces part of Tehrik-i-Taliban. – AFP, January 21; *Guardian Unlimited*, January 22



January 22, 2008 (UNITED STATES): U.S. citizen Jose Padilla, an enemy combatant who was accused of planning to detonate a radioactive device in the United States, was sentenced to 17 years in prison. Padilla, who has been detained for more than three years and who had attended an al-Qa`ida training camp in Afghanistan in 2000, was arrested and declared an enemy combatant when he returned to the United States in 2002. Prosecutors were seeking a life sentence for Padilla. Two co-defendants—Adham Amin Hassoun and Kifah Wael Jayyousi—received 15 and 12 year sentences, respectively. – *New York Times*, January 22

January 22, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): The British government announced that young Muslim women are increasingly involved in “violent extremism.” The government announced that there is “no single profile” of a radicalized citizen, but that “they are likely to be young—generally younger than 30—and male, although the number of women who support and participate in violent extremism is increasing.” – AFP, January 22

January 23, 2008 (GLOBAL): A new 28-minute videotape featuring al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi appeared on Islamist web forums. During the recording, al-Libi calls on Islamic scholars to support the jihad and for militant groups to fight strictly for Islamic causes, rather than national or political ones. – AP, January 24

January 23, 2008 (IRAQ): Approximately 38 people were killed after a bomb exploded and destroyed an estimated 50 buildings in a slum in Mosul. – AP, January 26

January 24, 2008 (IRAQ): Brigadier General Salah al-Juburi, the chief of police of Ninawa Province, was killed by a suicide bomber in Mosul. The assailant was in a police uniform, and the attack occurred as al-Juburi was inspecting a bomb attack from the previous day. – AFP, January 24

January 24, 2008 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities raided suspected al-Qa`ida hideouts in southeastern Turkey. One police officer and at least one militant were killed during the operation, which occurred in the city of Gaziantep. – *Guardian Unlimited*, January 24; Reuters, January 24

January 25, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced that his government will soon launch an extensive operation against al-Qa`ida fighters in Mosul. The announcement comes after a series of terrorist attacks in the northern Iraqi city. – *Voice of America*, January 25

January 25, 2008 (LEBANON): A car bombing killed a senior Lebanese intelligence officer, Captain Wissam Eid, along with his bodyguard. Eid was one of Lebanon's top terrorism investigators. Two others were also killed in the attack, which occurred in Beirut. – AFP, January 25; AP, January 27

January 27, 2008 (IRAQ): U.S. military spokesman Rear Admiral Gregory Smith told reporters that al-Qa`ida in Iraq is using teenagers as suicide bombers. Smith said, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq is trying to brainwash children with hate and death... they seek to create a culture of violence, hate and despair...[and] are sending 15-year-old boys on suicide missions to spread death and helplessness.” – AFP, January 27

January 28, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A grand jirga of 18 tribes in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) was convened in the morning, and an agreement was reportedly reached to form a *lashkar* (tribal army) against Taliban fighters. According to Pakistani press reports, some “ten to fifteen thousand armed men” attended the jirga. – *Daily Times*, January 30

January 28, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): A woman was abducted by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) on Jolo Island in the southern Philippines. ASG has apparently demanded a ransom for the captive's release. – *Gulf News*, January 29

January 28, 2008 (SOMALIA): Two Somalis and two aid workers from Medecins Sans Frontieres were killed after a roadside bomb struck their vehicle near Kismayo. – Reuters, January 28

January 28-29, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Top al-Qa`ida operative Abu Laith al-Libi was believed killed by a Predator drone in North Waziristan. Jihadist websites have released congratulatory martyrdom statements recognizing al-Libi's death. Twelve others were also believed killed in the attack, including Arabs and Central

Asians. – ABC News, January 31; AP, February 1

January 29, 2008 (ALGERIA): A suicide bomber drove his vehicle at a police station in Thenia, approximately 30 miles east of Algiers, killing at least four people. Security forces opened fire on the vehicle before it reached the station, causing the bomber to detonate his explosives early. – AFP, January 29

January 29, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Approximately 500 women in Kandahar protested the abduction of Cyd Mizell, a female American aid worker who was kidnapped on January 26. During the gathering, the women drafted a resolution that stated, “We strongly condemn the abduction of a foreign woman who was working for Kandahar people and Kandahar women.” No group has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. – AFP, January 29

January 29, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb exploded in Kandahar Province, killing two civilians. It is believed that the bomb was intended for government or international security forces. – AFP, January 30

January 30, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Four Afghan roadworkers were beheaded by Taliban militants, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry. The workers were abducted a week earlier in Nuristan Province in the country's northeast. The militants had demanded a ransom payment for the release of the workers, and according to the Afghan government the families failed to comply with the demands. – AFP, January 30; Reuters, January 30

January 30, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber targeted a NATO convoy in Kandahar Province, yet missed its target and instead injured four civilians. There were no NATO casualties. – AFP, January 30

January 30, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): According to Philippine Armed Forces Chief Hermogenes Esperon Jr., the number of active Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) operatives in the Philippines has been reduced to approximately 20 men from a previous high of 30-40. When questioned as to whether JI is receiving funding from abroad, the military chief said, “We have some indications that there

are some funding still coming into them but not as much as they could. The global community has grown so weary about illegal transactions, illegal transfers of funds. We are on the lookout for that.” – *Sun Star*, January 30

January 30, 2008 (KYRGYZSTAN): Authorities arrested Abdulkhai Yuldashev, who they accused of being tied to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. – AP, January 31

January 31, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A car bomb targeted an Afghan army bus in Kabul, wounding four civilians and one soldier. The attack took place in the capital's Taimani neighborhood. – AP, January 30

January 31, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber exploded inside a mosque in Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province, killing provincial Deputy Governor Pir Mohammad along with five others. – AP, January 31

January 31, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers launched an operation on an Abu Sayyaf Group camp in Tawi-Tawi in the southern Philippines. Although the raid targeted Jemaah Islamiyah leader Dulmatin, he managed to elude capture. Abu Sayyaf commander Radi Upao, however, was killed in the attack. – AFP, February 1

February 1, 2008 (MAURITANIA): Gunmen fired shots at the Israeli Embassy in Mauritania. No casualties were suffered by the embassy staff, although three civilian bystanders were injured. The attack was conducted at approximately 2:00 AM, and the terrorists fled in a vehicle after the attack. Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb later claimed credit for the operation. – AFP, February 1

February 1, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Two Frontier Corps troops and four policemen were killed in North Waziristan Agency, as a suicide car bomber targeted a security checkpoint. The attack took place near Mir Ali. – Reuters, February 1

February 1, 2008 (IRAQ): More than 90 people were killed in Baghdad when terrorists remotely detonated explosives that were carried on the bodies of two women with Down syndrome. One blast occurred in al-Ghazal, while the other was in al-Jadida district. A span of 10 minutes

separated the two attacks. – Bloomberg, February 1; AFP, February 1

February 2, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Three Islamist militants and two policemen were killed after a long firefight in the North-West Frontier Province. The attack erupted after police surrounded a house that was believed to contain militants. – AFP, February 2

February 3, 2008 (SOMALIA): Eight civilians were killed after a roadside bomb exploded near a minibus in Mogadishu. – *Anchorage Daily News*, February 2

February 3, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Two Taliban commanders were killed in Bakwa district of Farah Province after Afghan and international troops raided the compound in which they were being sheltered. – Reuters, February 4

February 3, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan security forces killed 10 Taliban fighters in Deh Rawood district of Uruzgan Province. – Reuters, February 4

February 4, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A police patrol in Helmand Province was targeted by a roadside bomb, killing two officers. The attack, which took place inside Kandahar city, was blamed on Taliban militants. – The Canadian Press, February 5

February 4, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb caused damage to a taxi in Helmand Province, killing five civilians; a woman and two children were among the dead. – The Canadian Press, February 5

February 4, 2008 (IRAQ): Mosul's regional command of the Islamic State of Iraq posted a statement on an Islamist website that they have started a campaign to attack U.S. troops, Iraqi Shi'a and Kurdish peshmerga forces in northern Iraq. – AP, February 4

February 4, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber riding a motorbike killed at least six people in Rawalpindi. The bomber detonated his payload when he was next to a bus filled with members of the security forces. – al-Jazira, February 4

February 4, 2008 (THAILAND): One person was killed in Mayo district of Pattani Province after a bomb exploded 20 yards from an Islamic boarding school. The attack, which was believed to have

been orchestrated by Muslim insurgents, seriously wounded the district's chief. – AP, February 4

February 4, 2008 (THAILAND): Six people were wounded in Muang district in Yala Province after a bomb exploded in the front basket of a motorcycle. – *Bangkok Post*, February 4

February 4, 2008 (ISRAEL): One person was killed and 11 wounded when a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated his payload in the Israeli town of Dimona. According to the London paper *The Times*, the bombing was “claimed by a Gaza-based splinter group of Fatah.” – *The Times*, February 5

February 5, 2008 (IRAQ): According to U.S. Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, al-Qa`ida is sending operatives from Iraq to other countries to establish terrorist cells. The decision, according to McConnell, is a result of al-Qa`ida's weakening presence and ability to operate in Iraq. – AP, February 5

February 5, 2008 (IRAQ): Eight members of an Awakening Council were killed as a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside the home of Shaykh Shathr al-Obeidi, who leads the council in Awad village 40 kilometers north of Baghdad. – AFP, February 6

February 5-6, 2008 (SOMALIA): At least 20 people were killed in Bosaso after terrorists planted grenades in a building that was primarily used by Ethiopian migrants. – BBC, February 6

February 6, 2008 (IRAQ): Twenty-eight suspected militants were arrested by a tactical Iraqi security force near Salman Pak, 20 miles south of Baghdad. The operation was conducted under the supervision of U.S. Special Forces, and the detained militants were believed linked to al-Qa`ida in Iraq. – UPI, February 7

February 6, 2008 (IRAQ): According to the U.S. and Iraqi militaries, al-Qa`ida in Iraq is training children as gunmen and kidnappers. An AFP report on the development states that “in the [captured] videos released to reporters, boys apparently as young as nine are seen wearing balaclava masks and European soccer jerseys and brandishing pistols, machine-guns and rocket launchers during a series of training exercises.”

– AFP, February 7

February 6, 2008 (PAKISTAN): According to various press reports, the Pakistani military has agreed to a temporary cease-fire with Baitullah Mehsud and his Tehrik-i-Taliban in South Waziristan Agency. – *National Post*, February 9

February 6, 2008 (THAILAND): One soldier was killed after a bomb, hidden in the basket of a motorcycle, exploded near a Chinese shrine in southern Thailand's Pattani Province. Authorities suspect Muslim insurgents were behind the blast. – AP, February 6

February 6, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A statement by al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan leader Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid appeared on Islamist internet forums in which he vowed revenge for the killing of al-Qa`ida commander Abu Laith al-Libi, who was allegedly targeted by a Predator drone in Pakistan in late January. – Reuters, February 6

February 7, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Three NATO soldiers were wounded by a suicide car bomber in Khost Province. – Voice of America, February 7

February 7, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): The government signed an extradition order that will send Abu Hamza al-Masri, who is currently in prison for inciting racial hatred, to the United States for trial. The well-known former preacher of the Finsbury Mosque, al-Masri faces 11 terrorism-related charges in the United States. – CNN, February 7

February 8, 2008 (GERMANY): The German government announced that "German security authorities have seen a qualitative increase in al-Qaida activity on the internet." According to an Interior Ministry spokesman, "We have very clearly seen that al-Qa`ida increasingly uses the internet for three components—a massive radicalization, recruiting and the spreading of technical information on how to carry out a terror attack, including construction of explosive devices." Furthermore, German authorities believe that al-Qa`ida increasingly sees Germany as a target for future attacks. – AP, February 8

February 8, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Two Afghan soldiers were killed after a roadside bomb struck their vehicle

in Sangin district, Helmand Province. – Reuters, February 9

February 8, 2008 (IRAQ): Four U.S. soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb during a patrol northwest of Baghdad. – Reuters, February 9

February 8, 2008 (MAURITANIA): France announced that it will increase security assistance to Mauritania. The decision came in the wake of a series of terrorist attacks that have occurred in the country in the last few months. – Reuters, February 9

February 9, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi authorities announced the death of an al-Qa`ida in Iraq leader, Abu Omar, who was killed by security forces in Samarra. – Voice of America, February 9

February 9, 2008 (SOMALIA): Gunmen attacked a UN compound in Mogadishu, striking the facility with assault rifle fire and rocket-propelled grenades. There were no known casualties at the compound. – AP, February 9

February 9, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Mullah Abdul Wasay Akhund accidentally killed himself, along with his two children and two other men, after he prematurely detonated a bomb he was building at his home in Helmand Province. – CNN International, February 11

February 9, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 15-20 people attending an Awami National Party opposition rally were killed by a suicide bomber in Charsadda, in the North-West Frontier Province. – AFP, February 9

February 10, 2008 (UNITED STATES): According to U.S. officials, six Guantanamo Bay detainees, among them Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, may soon be charged for their roles in the September 11 attacks. Prosecutors may seek the death penalty against at least one of the detainees. – Voice of America, February 10

February 10, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Approximately six people were wounded after a bomb ripped through an amateur song and dance contest in Lanao del Norte Province in Mindanao. – *Manila Times*, February 12

February 10, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A newly released poll by the U.S.-based group Terror Free Tomorrow found that support for Usama bin Ladin in Pakistan has dropped considerably. According to the poll, which was conducted last month, only 24% of Pakistanis approve of Bin Ladin. In August 2007, a similar survey found that 46% of Pakistanis approved of Bin Ladin, a considerable drop. The January poll also found that only 18% of the population supports al-Qa`ida and only 19% supports the Taliban. – AP, February 10

February 10, 2008 (IRAQ): U.S. military officials announced that they recently captured documents from al-Qa`ida in Iraq leaders demonstrating how the terrorist group has been weakened in the country. According to a U.S. military spokesman, the documents provide "clear and compelling evidence that the Iraq volunteer citizens' groups...are restricting the terrorists' freedom of movement," and "shows that al-Qa`ida regards these groups as a grave threat and the terrorists are increasingly targeting them." The documents were captured in November 2007. – AFP, February 10

February 10, 2008 (IRAQ): A firefight between a Sunni neighborhood watch group—known as the Sons of Iraq—and al-Qa`ida in Iraq fighters left five members of the group dead along with 10 al-Qa`ida fighters. The al-Qa`ida ambush and subsequent firefight occurred in Ninawa Province. – CNN, February 10

February 10, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): The Norwegian Embassy in Kabul was closed due to terrorist threats. The move comes after terrorists attacked the Serena Hotel in Kabul on January 15, in which a Norwegian journalist was killed. The Norwegian foreign minister was in the hotel at the time, but did not suffer any injuries. – AP, February 10

February 10, 2008 (IRAQ): At least eight civilians were killed as a suicide car bomber detonated his explosives near Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad. It appears that the attack targeted a checkpoint, but the bomber detonated his explosives prematurely after coming under fire. – AP, February 10

February 10, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi security forces and U.S. soldiers arrested the acting director of a psychiatric hospital in



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Department Head  
Department of Social Sciences (West Point)

**CONTACT**

Combating Terrorism Center  
U.S. Military Academy  
607 Cullum Road, Lincoln Hall  
West Point, NY 10996  
Phone: (202) 425-8578  
Email: [sentinel@usma.edu](mailto:sentinel@usma.edu)  
Web: [www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/)

\* For Press Inquiries: (202) 425-8578

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Baghdad, accusing him of “supplying al-Qa`ida in Iraq with the mentally impaired women that it used to blow up two crowded animal markets in the city on February 1, killing about 100 people,” according to a February 12 report in London’s *The Times*.

February 11, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Top Taliban commander Mullah Mansour Dadullah was wounded and captured by Pakistani security forces in Baluchistan Province. A military statement said that “initial information reveals that Mullah Mansour Dadullah is injured and has been arrested while trying to enter into Pakistan.” Dadullah’s current role in the Taliban is not clear since it is believed that Taliban leader Mullah Omar dismissed him from command recently. – Reuters, February 11

February 11, 2008 (IRAQ): Twin car bombs ripped through Baghdad, killing at least 11 people. It is suspected that the attack was aimed at Shaykh Ali Hatem, one of the main forces behind the “awakening” movement. – *New York Times*, February 12

February 11, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan’s ambassador to Afghanistan, Tariq Azizuddin, disappeared in Pakistan’s tribal Khyber region, and authorities suspect that he may have been abducted. – [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), February 11

February 11, 2008 (PAKISTAN): At least six people were killed when a suicide bomber exploded at a political rally in Eidak, North Waziristan Agency. The rally was affiliated with the Awami National Party. – [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), February 11

February 12, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): One NATO soldier was wounded after a suicide car bomber exploded next to a convoy in Farah Province. – AP, February 12

February 12, 2008 (SYRIA): Top Hizb Allah operative Imad Mughniyyeh was killed in a car bomb in Damascus. – Reuters, February 13